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DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

"Irish Children's Literature and Cultural Identity-
A Study of Three Novels by Elizabeth O'Hara:
The Hiring Fair, *Blaeberry Sunday* and *Penny-Farthing Sally.*"

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HINWEIS

Diese Diplomarbeit hat nachgewiesen, dass die betreffende Kandidatin befähigt ist, wissenschaftliche Themen selbstständig sowie inhaltlich und methodisch vertretbar zu bearbeiten. Da die Korrekturen der Beurteilenden nicht eingetragen sind und das Gutachten nicht beiliegt, ist daher nicht erkenntlich mit welcher Note diese Arbeit abgeschlossen wurde. Das Spektrum reicht von sehr gut bis genügend. Die Habilitierten des Instituts für Anglistik und Amerikanistik bitten diesen Hinweis bei der Lektüre zu beachten.

Declaration of Authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written this Master thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references, either in the footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

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1. Introduction

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne has always been a writer who tried to present stories and tales of ordinary Irish people in her novels. She does not aim at forcing people to understand their Irish heritage, but likes to function more as a historian of emotion, giving insights into individual human feelings[1]. Literature seems to be one of the most popular ways for an author to express human attitudes and opinions. Furthermore, it is an opportunity for the reader to access other cultures, backgrounds and opinions, which usually are formed within one´s social system. This is what Éilís Ní Dhuibhne expresses in her adult novels. She tries to convey forms of Irishness to her readers in order to make them aware of their special and powerful heritage. Under the pseudonym of Elizabeth O'Hara she aims at the same purpose but with a different audience, children.

With her children's literature she recalls a past world, the world of the 19th century with all its tragic events and consequences. We shall ask ourselves if a writer, by evoking the past, is able to transfer cultural and national knowledge to her young readers? And we shall want to know if the writer is able to help them acquire a certain sense of cultural nationalism which will shape the child reader's perception of national identity.

In childhood the reader is still in a process of identity acquisition and during this, children might be prone to unconsciously absorb more information about their country's past than at any other stage of their life. Thus, children's literature enables the writer to pass on perspectives of the past that help to shape the child's attitude towards his country. Cultural as well as national identity plays an important role in our lives as they provide us with the identity of belonging to a group of people. Therefore, the way Elizabeth O'Hara makes use of children's literature may help children to gain an insight into their national conscience.

[1] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 2.

Having identified Elizabeth O'Hara as a historian of emotion in Ireland and as a writer of Irish concerns, this M.A. thesis tries to elaborate how national and cultural identity are presented in O'Hara's works for children. By means of her three most popular children's novels, *The Hiring Fair*, *Blaeberry Sunday* and *Penny-Farthing Sally*, we shall look at how Irishness and aspects of Irish traditions are incorporated into her works. Plot summaries will give a short outline of the novels' concern. By interpreting other important aspects of Irish history, it shall be deduced at how Elizabeth O'Hara wrote about Irish culture for children. By describing the setting, historical time and aspects of Irishness and myth in the novels, the thesis sets out to explain how national and cultural identity are transferred to children by a writer of Irish concern.

The theoretical background of this work will deal with the development of children's literature and its diverse genres in order to embed O'Hara's trilogy in the realm of children's literature. Moreover, a theoretical outline of Ireland's history will be given to understand particular political and historical developments which will occur in the novels (for instance, the Parnell myth).

This M.A. thesis aims at investigating the depiction of Irish history and Irishness in children's literature written by Elizabeth O'Hara. Moreover, it asks to what extent national as well as cultural identity needs to be communicated in Irish children's literature in order to make the reader fully aware of their national consciousness.

2. Definitions of Children's Literature

When it comes to defining "children's literature", one has to seek an explanation of the term itself: It is a category of books with the intention of aiming at a particular reading audience, namely children. But several considerations have to be made in this case: Is a children's book written by children or a book written for children? And, if it is a book written for children, is it still a children's book if it is only read by adults? And adult books, what if they are read by children? Is it then children's literature? As can be seen, categorisation and definition pose problematic questions. Another relevant criticism in children's literature is not only the idea that "children's literature" might pose problems with the definition but also with the term "child" itself[2]. As Philippe Ariès, historian, states:

> The point is that ideas entertained about these [family] relations may be dissimilar at moments separated by lengthy periods of time. It is the history of the idea of the family which concerns us here, not the description of manners of the nature of law. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult[3].

Terms like family and childhood function within cultural and social frameworks as carriers for changeable social, moral and ethical values and motives. The terms child and children's literature are connected in the criticism of children's literature all over the world. The terms unite by speaking of the child as an existing entity which may be described differently in different cultures. At least, there is the assumption of the existence of the (reading) child which makes children's literature more accessible to critics[4]. Notions of the "child", "childhood" and "children's literature" therefore are contingent, embodying the social construction of a

[2] Lesnik-Oberstein, K.: 1996, 17-18.
[3] Ariès, P., 1973 cit. in: Lesnik-Oberstein K.: 1996, 19.
[4] Ariès, P., 1973 cit. in. Lesnik-Oberstein, K.: 1996, 19-22.

particular historical context. They are fictions intended to redress reality as much as to reflect it.[5]

A further important factor in children's literature is the definition of what a child is. Specific features of childhood which are transcultural and diachronic include spontaneous play, sexual immaturity, physiological constraints (children are smaller, and thus often weaker), plus the tendency of emotional attachment to mature figures and their incapability for abstract thought. Children develop along different stages and thus will see the world with different eyes at each stage. This also includes different modes of thinking and shaping stories. The concept of childhood presents itself as a very complex one and is anything but a stable concept. It has changed so often over different periods of time and therefore, the literature it defines cannot be spoken of a stable entity at all[6].

Children's books should be studied for two main reasons: firstly, they give an account of the social and educational status of a society and furthermore, they are important politically and commercially. Secondly, because studying children's fiction is delightful and even funny. Besides these two reasons, accepted "major authors" like James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, Charles Dickens, Christina Rossetti, Mark Twain or Aldous Huxley have contributed to children's literature. This can only be regarded as an impressive list if their writing for children is acknowledged equally with their writing for adults. Children's literature contributes a lot to the acquisition of cultural values and it is important for a child's literal education. So, it is wrong to claim children's literature to be inferior to adult literature. Neither can it be labelled simple or trivial as many texts written for children prove their variety and vitality.[7]

Writing and publishing children's literature has always served a certain purpose, adequate for the social and moral circumstances of the

[5] Myers, M.,1988 cit.in. Watkins, T.: 1996, 35.
[6] Hunt, P.: 1996, 57-60.
[7] Hunt, P.: 1991, 17-21.

time. Socialisation, education and the upbringing of the young usually plays a role in children's literature. In the beginning, the purpose of children's literature centred around questions of didacticism and moral purpose, which later shifted to other values. Another important issue when discussing children's literature is ideology as fiction is always constructed within a society and its economic and political circumstances[8].

Many critics may argue over an accurate definition of children's literature. They might say that there is no literature written only for children but writing a book for children clearly means applying a different set of writing skills than compared to writing an adult novel. A writer aiming at a young audience must restrict himself to certain areas of experience and vocabulary, which means that children's books have to be approached differently than adult literature. Adult readers never share the same background as children which implies that a text always has an intended reader.[9]

Definitions of literature can be divided into definitions by features, definitions by cultural norms and definitions according to the uses of a text by individuals. Every text disposes of certain characteristic markers – such as words and structures – which identifies fiction to be especially produced for children. Children's books influence the views of the child, which implies that children's books are written to acquire both culture and language of a group of people. Literature is a value-term itself and it seems that children's literature defines itself in terms of its audience.[10]

Elizabeth O'Hara's trilogy of Sally Gallagher concentrates exactly on the acquisition of culture and language. The young heroine Sally finds herself on a quest for identity, which shapes her character and leads her to become an adult. Sally experiences enclosure and walls within her life in the country and encounters several inhibitions caused by Irish society. It is

[8] Sarland, C. cit. in: Hunt, P.: 1996, 41-55.
[9] Hunt, P.: 1991, 42-47.
[10] Hunt, P.: 1991, 48-56.

the coming of age of a girl, centering around the cultural issues of Ireland at the turn of the century.

John Rowe Townsend defines literature as all works of imagination which are transmitted primarily by means of the written word or spoken narrative with the addition of those works of non-fiction which by their qualities of style or insight may be said to offer experience of a literary nature[11]. Therefore, children's literature is also a literary work of imagination belonging to literature in general. The history of children's literature coincides with that of the novel. The eighteenth century novel had been seen in England as a "family" reading. The words "young people" and "our youth" appear in nearly every review or essay collected in Ioan Williams' *Novel and Romance 1700-1800*. The essays deal with questions such as which kind of the novel was more appropriate with regard to moral, social and literary education of British youth. Judgement of novels had always involved a hypothetical young reader. By the beginning of the twentieth century children's literature was emerging. Because of the sharp partition between adult's and children's fiction it can be assumed that children read books in a different way and required special books written for them[12]. Children's books carry with them two terms linked in the context of the stories: "enclosure" and "freedom". From the 18th century onwards children's literature presents a movement from a state of "enclosure" to a state of "freedom" and openness, which influences the shaping and the formation of the character of the child. Literature may present children within walls, restricted in finding their liberty and inhibited in their development. Walls and inhibitions may seem to disturb the child's development into a free human being, yet they are necessary and helpful in directing the child's growth. Enclosure, therefore, is not to be seen only in its negative aspects but also as a means of giving the child guidance and teaching it discipline. Without enclosure, the child's essence and identity

[11] Townsend, J.R.: 1990, 60.
[12] Hughes, F. A.: 1990, 72-77.

are in danger of remaining unshaped.[13] Children's books are written for people who are in a process of growing up, of acquiring an identity, of finding out who they are and who they want to be. This usually leads to questions of self purpose and the attempt to discover what it is that makes an individual indubitably him or herself. The quest of identity structures a lot of books about children.[14]

2.1. Elizabeth O'Hara or Éilís Ní Dhuibhne?

The writer is known as a producer of short stories and adult novels, in particular for her writing of *Midwife to the Fairies*. Under the pseudonym of Elizabeth O'Hara she also writes children's literature. Her publications of children's books include the trilogy of Sally Gallagher (*The Hiring Fair*, *Blaeberry Sunday* and *Penny-Farthing Sally*), which is the topic of this thesis, and *The Sparkling Rain* (1994).[15]

For her children's books she intentionally chose a different name from her real Irish one. She prefers to be clear about the differences between her adult literature and her children's literature by using another name.

> I used that pseudonym for my children's books. There were two reasons. One, to distinguish them from my adult books. Two, to use a name that someone would be able to pronounce. This is always a help when trying to buy a book. It was my grandmother's name-and Éilís the Gaelic form for Elizabeth[16].

We can only assume why she does not give any other information about her children's novels in the interview cited above. It might be that O'Hara has different intentions with her writing for children than she has with her adult books. She tries to convey national as well as cultural identity

[13] Ang, S.: 2000, 1-3.
[14] Ang, S.: 2000, 5.
[15] http://www.eilisnidhuibhne.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=27, 13.10.2008.
[16] http://www.prairieden.com/front_porch/visiting_authors/dhuibhne.html, 13.10.2008.

in her adult books to the same extent, but probably with a different aim than in her children's literature. Children can still be shaped differently as they have not acquired their full cultural identity yet. She can give them an insight into Irishness with true stories about Irish history on a different level. With adults, one always has the problem that they might not want to listen and accept that someone is teaching them about their past, even when they are Irish readers, even about their own identity. Child readers may criticize what she has to write but they probably will absorb the facts easier than an adult writer would. Adults tend to view facts from diverse angles, criticize and call things into question, whereas with children the flow of information might proceed easier.

Her talent in writing children's books has been rewarded by an association called "Children's Books Ireland". The organization establishes a shortlist of books for every year and awards exceptional children's literature in Ireland. The Bisto Book Award (Bisto Premier Foods being the sponsor) is one of the most prestigious Irish children's book awards. Books are chosen for their excellence in writing and illustration[17]. Two of the three novels treated in this thesis have been winners of this prize. *The Hiring Fair* got the Bisto Merit Award in 1993 with laudatory voices from several popular papers like Madeleine Keane of *The Sunday Independent*: "A moving story with a memorable heroine at its heart.[18]" *Blaeberry Sunday* had even been voted in the category of The Bisto Book of the Year in 1994[19].

One can deduce from these awards that Elizabeth O'Hara is known as an outstanding writer for children's literature in her country. With her sensitive way of developing a character like Sally Gallagher and placing her in troubled times in Irish history, she creates a literary revival of her own, giving children insight into a world less comprehensible than their own, but

[17] http://www.childrensbooksireland.com/content/view/45/133/, 13.10.2008.
[18] O'Hara, E.: 1993, page coming after the cover.
[19] http://www.childrensbooksireland.com/content/view/44/192/, 13.10.2008.

by applying a skilful and emphatic technique she reaches out to make the Irish past comprehensible even to them.

As will be pointed out in the following chapters, child readers are attracted to characters who make their way without an adult showing them the way or constantly pointing out problems to them. O'Hara's heroine Sally is exactly such a character: although she is forced to leave her home and to work as a hired girl, she develops positively without a parent guiding her through the world. She freely decides to hold hands with Manus although this is seen as a sin concerning Irish traditions, and furthermore, she chooses to leave her family for Dublin to discover the world far away from the remote Donegal glen she lives in. Elizabeth O'Hara invented an amazing character, carrying within typical features that make the heroine attractive to young readers and motivates them to take part in Irish history and the Irish past.

2.2. Intended Audiences

As all societies use narrative to create traditions, stories become a vital part of a group's daily world, embedded in its culture and holding a structure that reflects heroic journeys, traditional holidays and acceptable cultural practices. Alongside this structure, a group of individuals can better acknowledge the world around themselves and their place in it.[20]

Children try to identify with the heroes presented in the fiction as the stories hold solutions for dealing with adult rules and show them how other children solve their problems in life. Stories mostly recount youthful heroes or heroines who solve problems on their own. The attraction of reading such books is formed by these heroes and heroines because they act independently without an adult to show them the way. Stories of orphans, or young heroes and heroines being sent away from home or having been

[20] May, J. P.:1995, 38-39.

totally isolated from society, form the basis for memorable characters and catch young readers' attention[21].

Characters in the stories usually reflect the author's implied audience. The hero's size and relationship to the adults in the story indicate who the author was writing the story for. Also the plot structure tells a lot about the intended audience. Many books of children's fantasy contain traditional folkloric structures of two settings, the secure home and unpredictability of nature[22].

Peter Hunt's opinion on children's books is that they can yet be defined in terms of the implied reader. Careful reading of a book usually reveals who the writing was designed for[23]. Another definition of children's books is given by Miles McDowell who concentrates on textual aspects of children's fiction:

> Children's books are generally shorter; they tend to favour an active rather than a passive treatment, with dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection; child protagonists are the rule; conventions are much used; the story develops within a clear-cut moral schematism which much adult fiction ignores; children's books tend to be optimistic rather than depressive; language is child-oriented; plots are of distinctive order, probability is often discarded; and one could go on endlessly talking of magic, and fantasy, and simplicity, and adventure[24].

Some authors like to place their stories in the past and try to be accurate in their reflections of attitudes and events from other eras. Authors are telling stories of the past to a contemporary audience which usually implies that the story might have some current significance. These stories distance the reader from events while suggesting that the problems addressed by the characters still lurk in society today. The retelling of past

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[21] May, J.P.: 1995, 45.
[22] May, J.P.: 1995,49
[23] Hunt, P.: 1991, 64.
[24] McDowell, M. cit. in: Hunt, P.: 1991, 63.

values and expectations should cause the reader to reconsider his own society[25].

The question of standards by which children's literature is to be judged, is a very difficult one. With children's literature critics are faced by a wide variety of approaches, by disciplines like psychology, sociology, history, to mention only three.[26]

2.3. The Development of Children's Fiction

The development of children's literature has been closely linked to social, educational and economic factors of a country. Besides, countries and their cultures have their own collection of traditional stories. Myths emerged to explain natural phenomena like the changing seasons, fables propose a way to give useful advice and everyday truths, and folk- and fairy tales provide psychological satisfaction through their simplified system of reward and punishment, or as a means of working out relationships and fears in safety. Traditional tales often reflect basic truths and usually are embedded in the repertoire of children's stories all over the world. These stories lay ground for the writing of modern fantasy stories in children's literature during the 19th century. In the 20th century children's literature in Europe was primarily affected by serious themes like politics and war and the child's role in a harsh industrialized society.[27]

Children's literature industry can be considered as a very recent phenomenon on the book market. Children readers were directly addressed from the 1740's onwards but before children had their own books to read they had their schoolbooks. Schoolbooks formed the literate adult particularly during the 18th century, when children had no other literature at hand. Children learned to read with an ABC, which was given to them usually as a gift. Having mastered their ABC, they could go on to read other

[25] May, J.P.: 1995, 53-54.
[26] Townsend, J.R.: 1990, 58–59.
[27] Ray, S.: 1996, 654-655.

books, especially metrical versions of the Psalms. Mostly, the books were intended to instill piety, neatness, politeness and honouring one's parents[28]. Over the centuries moralists and educators tried to instruct children on morals about good or evil behaviour and warned them against books which were "the enemies of virtue, sources of vice, furtherers of ignorance and hinderers of all good learning"[29].

There was only one category of fiction that remained however unobjectionable: Aesop's *Fables*. Until the eighteenth century these fables were read in the classroom, preferably in Latin. The main thrust of the teaching of Aesops' *Fables* contained worldly wisdom, trimming one's sails to circumstance and caution.[30]

However, many works of children's fiction of the 18th century centred around the expressing of the "self" in predominantly social terms: the shaping of the self in terms of its contributions to society and its adherence to its collective values.[31] Reformation came along with a new moral earnestness about the purposes of literacy, and stories like Aesops' *Fables* were abhorred by the Protestant Authority. Children should read books of godly learning which Thomas White explicitly postulated in his work *A Little Book for Little Children* (1671):

> When thou can read, read no Ballads and foolish Books, but a Bible, and the Plainmans pathway to Heaven, a very plain holy book for you; get the Practice of Piety; Mr. Baxter's Call to the Unconverted; Allen's Allarum to the Unconverted; read the Histories of the Martyrs that dyed for Christ….Read also often Treatises of Death, and Hell and Judgement, and of the Love and Passion of Christ[32].

This is one of the first books ever addressed directly to children and yet the only important thing is to indoctrinate theological and devotional

[28] Hunt, P.: 1995,1-7.
[29] Hunt, P.: 1995,12.
[30] Hunt, P.: 1995,12-16.
[31] Ang, S.: 2000, 6.
[32] Hunt, P.: 1995, 19.

behaviour. Children's books at that time were nothing like they are now. It took another hundred years before children's books became closer to the image that they have nowadays[33].

It was the period between 1700 and 1750s in which the market for children's literature slowly started to develop. The child population began to grow and education became more and more a concern in society. Educational material was widely available and there was also a veritable explosion of material to encourage readers to exercise their imagination. A readership, hungry for popular reading, was created. In Village dame schools the poor were being encouraged to attend lessons, and higher up the social scale, where basic literacy had not been a problem, private academies set new demands for reading[34].

John Newbery, who started out as a provincial bookseller, played a significant role in the publication of children's books. He developed the children's branch of his publishing business to such an extent that this class of books could be seen as worthy of the kind of artistic and financial investment reserved for adult books. He was the first to see the potential and importance of children as the social base of the book market widened.[35] The most popular of the Newbery books was *Goody Two-Shoes*, which caught the spirit of the times, as it concerns middle-class preoccupation with thrift, hard work, and moral as well as business issues[36]. Around that time so-called chapbooks entered the book market. The eighteenth century chapbook was usually a sixteen page production (sometimes even thirty-two or sixty-four pages), which could easily be folded into a single printed sheet and therefore was most popular with the chapbook publishers. The chapbooks provided children with illustrations, traditional folk – and fairy tales, ballads, collections of riddles and prophecies to children. Even Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was

[33] Hunt, P.: 1995, 25.
[34] Hunt, P.: 1995, 29-33.
[35] Hunt, P.:1995, 34-36.
[36] Hunt, P.:1995, 37.

frequently abridged for children in chapbooks. *Robinson Crusoe* presented itself as the perfect children's book: here the reader could learn through the experience of living a hero's life. Generally, chapbooks developed into more targeted publications with children's chapbooks becoming recognizably distinct until around the 1840s when journals and cheaper versions of mainstream children's books took over the role of the chapbook[37].

The years between 1820 and 1850 were very uncertain years for the British Empire: Britain emerged from the Napoleonic wars into a world of industrial expansion and social and political chaos. The children's literature in this period concentrated intensively on the didactic moral tale, often fiercely evangelical[38].

The Romantic movement's rediscovery of the imagination and fantasy conduced vitally to the development of nineteenth-century literature. The brutal realities of Britain's industrialized and alienated society assisted the success of tales of fantasies and adventure, which often were a means to escape reality. Children's books started to change and reflect the cultural and moral history of the times[39].

Forms of writing and genres developed from that period on. The interest in children had been steady now for almost a century. The child as such offered an insight into the innocent nature of the human being, since it appeared to possess vitality and spirituality.[40].

In Romanticism, the immaculate freshness of childhood was very much emphasized. The ideal of the child during the Romantic era was always connected to its relationship to the adult, the individual, society and God. The assertion of childlike qualities into adult life is a great concern of the children's literature at that time. Childhood, as a time of play and

[37] Hunt, P.:1995, 43-45.
[38] Hunt, P.: 1995, 77-78.
[39] Hunt, P.: 1995, 101.
[40] Hunt, P.: 1995, 167-168.

irresponsibility, offered the possibility to flee a world which only privileged reason, progress and strict codes for morality and behaviour. The Age of Reason was seen with discontent by the Romantics because they built their principles on individual freedom and self-expression. Issues surrounding children, education and literature were part of a mutual dialogue between contesting agendas at that time.[41]

The Golden Age of children's literature took place during the years from 1860 to 1950 because during this period books would openly treat the balance of power between adult and child. Early books of this time strongly concentrate on the adult power over the child while in the second half of the century emphasis was put on the development of the child or adolescent. In various books the adult even embodies an impotent figure, a symbol of authority which has to be rejected along with other elements of enclosure. However, it is an era of children's literature in which child and adult generally are meant to coexist happily, in balance with each other and helping each other to discover one's identity and individuality.[42]

Many diverse images of childhood prevailed during that era. The child had to be perceived distinct to the "grown-up" and became "the other" with all the idealization, horror and projection such a status may imply. In some cases, the child was to be seen as determined by original sin. Later the theory of "original sin" became replaced by scientific theories of evolution, representing the child as biologically, intellectually, or socially primitive. Children were in a way "savages" before they would transform into civilized adults. Childhood was perceived as a process by which the human being reaches various stages of development, eventually leading to the fully formed adulthood. In relation to sexuality the child was seen innocent and ignorant whereas the adult was guilty of sexual desires. The Victorian child was often perceived as the innocent object of desire. The awareness of the child as a sexual being was given, but Victorian middle-

[41] Thacker, D./Webb, J.: 2002, 13-14.
[42] Ang, S.: 2000, 15.

class readers were brought up to think of sexuality as unclean, vicious or pervert.[43]

Writers of middle-class Victorian fiction used images of the child related to Romantic ideologies. The child was seen as an angelic infant. Child figures are prominent in adult fiction of that time because they served the purpose of challenging the corrupted adult world. [44]

> [T]he Victorians sought in literature, especially in narrative, both a diagnostic tool and a cure for social, cultural, and physical malaises; sought a means of dramatizing a wide variety of dearths, contradictions, and inadequacies characteristic of the "age of transition", as well as a format for reimagining traditional culture-generating myths.[45]

Children's books became more and more important over the next 20 years. Whereas in 1913, according to The English Catalogue of Books, 12.379 children's books were published, the number had risen to 16.091 in 1938. The theme, uniting all the publications of the time, is a pervading quietism, a retreat from the realities of the world surrounding the child and the book. Between the two world wars Britain and its society was changing rapidly. The extremes of wealth and poverty became more apparent. Children's literature at that point tried to ignore class and political struggles until it was no longer possible to do so.[46]

A.A. Milne became a popular national author because of his *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories (1926). The enchanted forest contains the whole of childhood and there is a hierarchy of types of children to identify with – Piglet, Tigger, and Roo. Many of the books at that time were illustrated and comic strips became increasingly widespread. Two genres of comics and magazines were the school story and the adventure story. For adults as

[43] Hunt, P.:1995,169-170.
[44] Thacker, D./Webb, J.: 2002, 41-42.
[45] Thacker, D./Webb. J.: 2002, 42.
[46] Hunt, P.: 1995, 193-95.

well as for children the most influential and lasting school stories emerged in the ages of the magazines. [47]

The new century brought with it a shifting response to social and cultural change and a renewal in children's literature. The increasing prominence of psychoanalysis made the image of the child more mysterious and threatening. It is no longer the alleged, inherent sinfulness of children that is feared like in the 19th century, but the child's actual behaviour. Children's literature of that time focuses on fears of moral poverty and the inability to exert influence in this world. The interest in children as representations of pre-social beings, suggests a connection with the Modernist fascination with the primitive and the search for origins.[48]

With the Second World War the stance of children's literature shifted. Some of the writers wrote enthusiastic articles, others began to ignore the whole thing. Writing about reality was too harsh, fantasy too uncomfortable. Besides, the economy of war time reduced the publication of children's books drastically. The 1944 Education Act released new impulses in reading. By the end of the war, children's literature was a respectable full member of the publishing world and ready to enter an era of richness and prosperity[49].

After the Second World War the situation changed and the children's book market gradually became more international. An International Youth Library was founded in Munich, in Bologna the Children's Book Fair was established. Lots of activities were set during that period. The era of the 1950's and the 1960's in Britain was seen as a second golden age of children's literature with famous authors like William Mayne, Joan Aiken, Leon Garfield or Lucy Boston. [50]

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[47] Hunt, P.: 1995, 202-10.
[48] Thacker, D./Webb, J.: 2002, 101-12.
[49] Hunt, P.: 1995, 222-224.
[50] Hunt, P.: 1995, 252-256.

With the emergence of the “teenager” during the 1970s as a distinct cultural category, discussions about what kind of books were suitable for this age group increased. After the 1970s the genre of the “teenage novel” began to prosper, the most common form being the first-person narrative with a teenager addressing the problems of adulthood[51].

The public awareness that reading is of great importance supports children’s books publishing: Children’s literature will continue in its many complex forms of manifestations until the end of time.[52]

2.4. Genres in Children’s Fiction

The year 1850 can be seen as an important year in the history of the book trade as a whole, but for children’s books in particular. Publishers started to produce cheaper reading for an expanding market and to serve the needs of a bigger reading audience. Middle-class children suddenly were allowed to choose their books by themselves with a wider choice, because many different genres of children’s fiction became available: adventure stories, school stories, nonsense, fantasy and fairy-tales. A series of education acts helped to extend literacy down the social scale so that even the children of the poor could be reached.[53] We shall look at the different genres that began to develop at that time.

2.4.1. Domestic Dramas

The Victorian English-speaking world was a man’s world, accentuating a man’s dream to establish a nation, to win wars or develop industrial and commercial wealth. The women’s place was at home with virtues to hold on to like piety, domesticity, sexual submission and repression. Children’s literature reflected the division of the two sexes in intensified and romanticized forms. The function of girls’ books was to

[51] Hunt, P.: 1995, 298.
[52] Hunt, P.: 1995, 321.
[53] Hunt, P.: 1995, pp. 130

glamorize the virtuous girl and woman. A well known British writer at that time was Charlotte M. Yonge, who incorporated the perfect impeccably virtuous, conscientious Victorian woman who knew her place and declared this even in her novels. Her family stories are most interesting and her novel *The Daisy Chain* (1856) is the most important forerunner to Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868). Alcott's presentation of the March sisters is largely based on incidents in her own life. The March family represents a family the reader might have known with qualities like warmth, truth and simplicity at the centre of the novel's heart[54]. John Rowe Townsend says about *Little Women* that it

> marks not only an increased truth-to-life in domestic stories, with children seen as people rather than examples of good and bad; it also marks a relaxation of the stiff and authoritarian stereotype of family life, persisting from the still recent times when the Fifth Commandment came first and the earthly father was seen quite literally as the representative of the heavenly one. [.....] A relationship between rulers and subjects had to be replaced by one of mutual affection. The family story could not work in an atmosphere of repression or of chilly grandeur. The key characteristic is always warmth.[55]

The presentation of the domestic sphere of the middle-class should help to gain insight into tests of patience, generosity and altruism that took place in a familiar setting, the demonstration of the poor children's life was also worth discussion in some novels. The brutal truth of Victorian life, where the children of the poor were undernourished and growing up in rural or urban slums, was portrayed in several children's books like George E. Sergent's *Roland Leigh: The Story of a City Arab* (1857). In some of the stories the children are presented as equal, for example, in Mrs. Charlesworth's *Ministering Children* (1854)[56].

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[54] Townsend, J.R.: 1983, pp. 77-79
[55] Townsend, J.R.: 1983, 79-80.
[56] Hunt, P.: 1995, 131-132.

> The child of rank put her arm around the child of poverty, pressed a kiss of tenderness upon her forehead, and putting the half-crown in her hand, turned away[57].

Children help each other in the idealized society portrayed in Charlesworth's fiction, a Sunday school novel inviting children to respond to the needs and sufferings of one another. Authors showed particular sympathy towards presenting the middle-class child, trying to appeal and help the underprivileged at the same time.[58]

2.4.2. Tales about Fairies and Fairy Tales

Tales about fairies are narratives depicting a world of leprechauns, kobolds, gnomes, elves and little people who live in the fairy kingdom or elfland. Moreover, there are fairy tales which do not include fairies in their cast of characters but present a reversal of fortune for the main characters which often culminates in a wedding. Magical creatures assist the hero or the heroine throughout the story in order to achieve happiness. The entire story usually demonstrates a moral point. This form of writing postdates the earliest writing for children. Fairy tales demonstrate that a readership is not easy to define as many tales about fairies or fairy tales were initially produced for adult readers but passed on into the domain of children's reading. For centuries tales about fairies and fairy tales had been embedded within popular story-telling narratives but with Perrault's *Contes* the free-standing fairy tale became the norm in children's literature[59].

During the Romantic period fantasy and fairy tales flourished, although the notions of freedom and natural inclination of children to a moral understanding was combined with the desire to shape and control.

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[57] Hunt, P.: 1995, 131.
[58] Hunt, P.: 1995, 133.
[59] Bottigheimer, R.B.: 1996, 152-153.

The Romantic era also set the tone for discussions about fantasies and fairy tales:[60]

> In assigning the fairy tale an absolute origin, and thus lending it a transcendent status beyond criticism, the early Romantics set the tone for many of the literary studies of fairy tales to follow. The Romantic belief in the fairy tale's unproblematic traditional status and oral, folk origins continues to inform much recent work on the fairy tale and its relation to the history of children's literature.[61]

Writing that extends the imagination was seen to be more nourishing for children than facts or tracts. With the brothers Grimm's stories, that entered the English literature scene, the child reader could invade a new universe of fairy tales and furthermore, the nursery repertoire was widened with the many tales. Alongside the brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen with his *Wonderful Stories* (1846) was a new reading experience for child readers with his traditional fairy-tales, fables and allegories. Fairy tales often were pre-selected and strategically cut because some Victorians thought the tales to be showing too much cruelty or violence. The stories were never as religious or didactic as their predecessors of evangelical writings had been but they always offered a moral and warned against the failings typical of childhood: greed, selfishness, curiosity and disobedience[62]. The world of the fairy tale became a familiar setting for children's stories throughout the nineteenth century. Towards the end of the century the fairy-tale was conventionalized enough to employ a new mode: the parodic treatment which usually was applied by Dickens and Thackeray. This technique was largely depending on the skill of the narrative voice and one of its masters was Nesbit with *The Book of Dragons* or *Nine Unlikely Tales*.[63]

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[60] Thacker, D./Webb, J.: 2002, 18.
[61] Richardson, A. cit. in Thacker, D./Webb, J.: 2002, 17.
[62] Hunt, P.: 1995, 137-138.
[63] Hunt, P.: 1995, 139-140.

The most popular and most original fiction of the 19th century was Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). This story should be read as a profound examination of systems, including those of social behaviour, logic and language. Alice's constant questioning of the creatures she meets reflects her childish ignorance of widely established rules of the adult world. Distribution of power between children and grown-ups is very well reflected in Alice's journey in Wonderland. One moment she is willing to take on adult responsibility and at the other she is humiliated or bullied by the creatures surrounding her. In the sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking Glass*, which was published in 1871, the episodic character is replaced by the tighter rules of a game of chess. Death is introduced as an important factor threatening life. Carroll parodies the logic of social structures - tea and dinner parties, games of croquet or chess are revealed as provisional as semantic difference: things are done like this, because this is how they are done. Alice's effort to understand the world and come to terms with it, mirrors Carroll's scepticism about all systems of human behaviour, may it be law, social conduct or education[64].

2.4.3. Poetry

A lot of the best poetry ever written is about children or childhood and a great part of what is the so-called canon of children's verse was never intended for a childhood audience at all. Some of the adult poems have even been adopted by children themselves. Popular themes for children are nature, magic, the sea, the weather, school and family life, adventure and anything that makes them laugh. Poets often choose to write about childhood and for children because they wish to explore "the child in themselves".[65]

[64] Hunt, P.: 1995, 140-142.
[65] Styles, M.: 1996, 190-91.

One of the best works of poetry produced for children was composed by Christina Rossetti. “Goblin Market” (1862), for instance, is a tale that depicts the lure of temptation beneath its fairy-tale narrative. “Sing Song” (1872), one of her other works, is a very melancholic poem about dying children. The simplicity of the poem combined with excellent metrical skill must not be misleading. The poem still raises important questions about childhood, time and change and Rossetti speaks to readers at many different levels. Rossetti’s tenderness is shown through the deep feelings beneath the poem’s lyric grace.[66]

Robert Louis Stevenson was even more successful than Rossetti with his collection of poems for children, “A Child’s Garden of Verses” (1885). He evokes sounds of his own childhood and excels in recreating a wide variety of experiences of children at play.[67]

During the 18th century most verse for children had to fulfil a didactic purpose, expressed in genres such as fables and hymns. By the early 19th century a change in attitude can be discerned. A number of poets are aspired to entertain rather than to educate young readers. Alongside light-hearted poems about the imaginary doings of animals, cradle songs became popular. Other common forms of children’s verse included limericks, narrative poems, ballads and nursery rhymes. Popular poets during these times were Burns, Clare, Keats, Shelley or Scott. Contemporary poetry of the 20th and 21st century keeps the popular forms of the past but also favours the vernacular and tends to be informal and unstructured. It is very accessible to children, who are often even encouraged to write poems of their own. Furthermore, today’s poetry for children emphasizes the child’s need to be loved, valued, entertained and protected.[68]

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[66] Hunt, P.: 1995, 161.
[67] Hunt, P.: 1995, 162.
[68] Styles, M.: 1996, 190-91.

2.4.4. Empire and Adventure Stories

Great Britain expanded her empire overseas and the British public was highly interested in the development that was taking place in the 19th century. Thousands of British people emigrated each year and Victorian children shared their parents' interest in the empire, expecting to work there when they left school, in trade, the armed forces or as public servants. Exotic places overseas offered the possibility of adventure within the hegemony of British imperialism and encouraged children to read adventure stories. The latter had always been a part of children's fiction but with the expanding empire those stories, which covered heroes and heroines like the boys and girls themselves, were even more interesting to read. The blending of the extraordinary with the probable was the most important and most compelling characteristic of the adventure story. Usually heroes leave home in the beginning of the story, due to a crisis at home, and seek their fortune elsewhere. The religious aspect is not as central as in earlier children's books, but still moral values are extolled. Moral teaching never found its ends as authors tried to guide their young readers towards a life of honesty and loyalty[69].

The genres of the adventure story and the historical novel may overlap but there are many adventure stories that are by no means historical. But nearly all famous writers of adventure stories have sought their subjects' tragedies at a particular period in history. Intense narratives of adventure and history are somewhat bound together and inseparable. The adventure story intended for boys has dual origins: one is *Robinson Crusoe* and the other the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott. Although *Robinson Crusoe* was originally not written for children, it was a novel widely read in classrooms. Therefore, *Robinson Crusoe* was considered very popular, whereas the novels of Sir Walter Scott had a formative

[69] Hunt, P.: 1995, 149-151.

influence on the proliferation of adventure novels in the 19th century. His novels set the trend to the nineteenth century adventure story[70].

The structure of adventure stories is similar to traditional folk – and fairy tales which often use stereotyped characters. Robert Louis Stevenson's adventure stories are also structured like folk tales. His popular novel *Treasure Island* finds its originality in the variation of the conventional pattern of the faithful companion and the stereotyped villains. Stevenson applies the adventure story formula in the character of Long John Silver and Jim's relationship with him. Silver, being the villain of the tale, becomes like a father to Jim and gives him at times genuine warmth. Silver is a moral enigma and thus Stevenson succeeds in presenting the adventure story as a magnificent instrument for asking serious questions about life[71].

2.4.5. School and School Stories

The school experience as a common experience is one within the readers of children's books. Many books have scenes set in schools or references to school life, but the school story describes a narrative which is entirely set on school territory. School stories for girls differ from those for boys. Stories for girls usually reflect the close link between school and home, whereas in boy stories references to home are rarely made. The 1870 Education Act in Britain marked the official step towards education for all, and made school stories even more popular, as many more readers could now identify with the characters[72].

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards Britain entered a period of prosperity and gave way to an industrial and more democratic society. All sections of the community gained in wages, rents, and profits. Parents, who could financially afford a better education for their children,

[70] Townsend, J.R.: 1983, 59-60.
[71] Hunt, P.: 1995, 151-153.
[72] Ray, S.: 1996, 348-349.

sent them away to boarding schools, which unfortunately often were rather chaotic and brutal with the upbringing of their offspring. School life changed its habits with religion placed at the centre of it, promoting sports and introducing more serious moral attitudes to their pupils. Headmasters contributed to these changes, especially Dr. Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby, who attacked drunkenness and bullying and made Christian values central. He introduced senior boys as prefects and practised corporal punishment only on rare occasions, and he encouraged games and sports for exercise and relaxation. Arnold was so popular that one of his students, Thomas Hughes, commemorated him in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857)[73]. The school story has its prominence especially with Thomas Hughes and also with F.W. Farrar's *Eric, or Little by Little*. To make a school story successful, the environment of a boarding school is required in order to reflect the isolation from the everyday atmosphere outside. The school world is an interesting world because it is self-contained with boys or girls as full citizens. The coming of age and the clash with the authority is material for a great drama. Furthermore, school life is full of moral issues with problems like bullying, cribbing, sneaking and loyalty to oneself and to a certain group[74].

Between 1899 and 1927 a number of books set in boys' schools gave a status to the school story for boys which the girls' school story did not enjoy at this time. They were usually based on the author's own schooldays as initiated by Thomas Hughes and carried on by Rudyard Kipling (*Stalky and Co*.) or Hugh Walpole (*Jeremy at Crale*). The girls' school story met its heights during the late 1920s and the 1930s and presented itself in various forms: serials, short stories in magazines, annuals and miscellaneous collections or books. Popular writers were Angela Brazil, Elsie Jeanette Oxenham and Elinor M. Brent-Dyer. After World War II it was Enid Blyton's stories set at boarding school which attracted many girl readers. School stories generally appeal to children at

[73] Hunt, P.: 1995, 153-154.
[74] Townsend, J.R.: 1983, 111-112.

an age when the peer group is important and when they are trying to explore independence and their future. Often school stories have been criticized for portraying an unreal picture of school life, but their authors have only responded to changes in society and therefore, school stories should be seen as providing a positive picture of one of the almost universal experiences of childhood and preparing readers to play a responsible role in society[75].

2.4.6. Religious Writing for Children

At its beginnings children's literature was closely related to religion. It had strong didactic purposes and was very much influenced by religious requirements and perceptions. The oldest form of religious instruction for children is represented by catechisms. Catechisms were said to be the best summaries of religion for children. Besides the catechisms, the Bible story was a durable genre. Having emerged in the mid-seventeenth century, they constituted the first extended prose narrative composed especially for child readers[76]. Bibles edited for children in the 17th and 18th centuries were usually illustrated. Popular devotional literature before 1800 included John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, James Janeway's *A Token for Children* or John Bunyan's *A Book for Boys and Girls: or, Country Rhimes for Children*. All devotional literature shared one single aim: to produce good Christian children[77]. During the 19th century, Evangelism became a major influence in the development of children's literature. Evangelical Christians saw the written word as a path to salvation. They wrote pious tracts to supplant vulgar chapbooks. Initially, tracts were aimed at adult readers but the Religious Tract Society (founded in 1799) decided to produce tract stories for children. The main purpose of the tract stories was to exhort. By providing a mass of reading material, the tractarians helped to set a trend for later literature in which the themes of death, repentance and poverty

[75] Ray, S.: 1996, 350-358.
[76] Bottigheimer, R.B.; 1996, 267-68.
[77] Bottigheimer, R.B.; 1996, 271-72.

overcome by virtue remained important.[78] In the 20th century the market for religious children's books became smaller and books were published by specialist publishers. Towards the end of the 20th century the market had changed and publishers had to meet market needs. Only few parents see religious content as necessary or desirable in their children's readings. That is why it remains to be seen if children's religious writing will be as popular in the 21st century, or if it remains a phenomenon of the past two hundred years.[79]

Elizabeth O'Hara's trilogy of Sally Gallagher interweaves different kinds of genres: on the one hand it is an adventure story with a heroine at its centre, trying to figure out her identity and Irish roots. On the other hand, features of domestic drama can be recognized when it comes to descriptions of the home, the kitchen or her life as a governess. Then again, the trilogy recollects realistic events of the past like the brutal truth of child labour. A hint of school stories may be discerned although the setting does not refer to the school story per se, but Sally establishes an intimate relationship to her teacher Miss Lynch, who is in some way her idol. Fairy tales and ancient Gaelic stories come to the narrative in form of story-telling: the oral tradition of handing down stories from the ancients is explicitly referred to when Skinny Joe recounts the story of the dragon, the boy and the princess. It is difficult to classify O'Hara's trilogy into only one genre as she combines elements of various other genres, thereby creating a heroine engaged in the quest for her own "self" and for a firm national and cultural identity .

[78] Montagnon, K.: 1996, 274-76.
[79] Montagnon, K.: 1996, 277-81.

3. Irish History and National Identity

The trilogy of Sally Gallagher strongly relates to Irish history and its cultural and national identity. Therefore definitions of "nation", "nationalism", "cultural identity", Irish politics and history or cultural aspects shall be taken into consideration to better understand the elements of the novels which are trying to convey a national or cultural identity. In the footnotes we will find a definition of "Nation" and "Nationalism" according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.[80]

The term "nationalism" had been used for the first time in 1798 by Augustin Barruel. He argues that the love of the nation took the place of the love of mankind in general. Since then the term has undergone various definitions by many writers. Eugene Kamenka defines a nation as "the ideal, natural or normal form of international political organisation, as the focus of men's loyalties"[81]. Hans Kohn regards nationalism as "a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state"[82]. Of course, many more definitions could be listed but in their essence they are all similar. The idea of a nation figures a unity of state and culture although it is composed of distinct and heterogeneous concepts[83].

National identity is part of people's everyday life. Belonging to a "nation" is probably the strongest of all forms of group identity. National identity may either be expressed via explicit symbols like flags, cultural icons, political leaders and so on, but it may also be evinced on a more unconscious level, for example, in a discourse between two people. When analysing "nation", one has to look at it from three diverse angles: nation as

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[80] A definition of **Nation** according to the OED, 1989, pp. 231: "an extensive aggregate of persons, so closely associated with each other by common descent language, or history, as to form a distinct race or people, usually organized as a separate political state and occupying a definite territory".
A definition of **Nationalism:** "1.) The doctrine that certain nations (as contrasted with individuals) are the object of divine election. 2.) Devotion to one's nation; national aspiration; a policy of national independence".
[81] Kamenka cit. in: Easthope, A.: 1999, 49.
[82] Kohn cit. in: Easthope, A.: 1999, 49.
[83] Easthope, A.: 1999, 49-50.

a class dominance, nation as “imagined community” and nation as real versus nation as spirit.[84] The writer and professor emeritus at Cornell University, Benedict Anderson coined the concept of “imagined communities”. His work *Imagined Communities* looks at nationalism from a different angle. He concentrates more on the cultural aspects of the concept, defining “nation” as “an imagined global political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”[85]

Anderson further explains why communities are imagined in the first place. Not even the smallest nation will ever know all or most of their fellow members. In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined to Anderson. Furthermore, the concept of nation itself is “limited” because it has finite boundaries beyond which lie other nations. The nation then is “sovereign” because its concept evolved in the period of Enlightenment and Revolution, a time at which the hierarchical dynastic realm was questioned. Every nation dreams about being free - the symbol of this freedom is the sovereign state. The concept of a nation is usually conceived in terms of deep comradeship, a fraternity between people of the same nation. This is why Anderson calls it a community. Nationalism needs to be understood within its cultural systems. Two of such cultural systems that could be compared to the “nation” of today were in former times the religious community and the dynastic realm[86].

However, the concept of nation did not just develop out of those two systems but out of the fundamental changes taking place in apprehending the world. The novel and the newspaper gave way to the representation of the kind of community that is the nation. Capitalism and print technology gave rise to the national consciousness. New vernaculars were born and step by step the use of the Latin language continued to decline. In print,

[84] Easthope, A.: 1999, 1-6.
[85] Anderson, B.: 1983, 6.
[86] Anderson, B.: 1983, 6-9.

language became more fixed and so the print-languages laid bases for the national consciousness.[87]

3.1. Nation as Class Dominance

A nation has often been perceived as a form of ideology, a way of thinking, which is designed to promote the interests of a particular social group. According to the idea of a nation, national state and national unity is a hegemonic invention perpetrated by the ruling class as to mask its own power. Somehow, a nation has to come into being, it must have a moment of origin. Often a nation derives from an exercise of force rather than democratic development. Easthope refers to Derrida who suggests that all human institutions originate in an act of violence being the force that marks the foundation of a nation. Easthope argues with the perception of a nation understood exclusively in terms of class dominance, being a too simplistic and reductive view.[88]

3.2. Nation as "Imagined Community"

Benedict Anderson combats the view that nationalism should be classified as "ideology", and states that it is a much wider experience which also has to do with kinship, gender or religion. Therefore, he argues that nations are "imagined communities". He uses the term "imagined" because human culture in general is constructed rather than the result of a natural process. Easthope states that Anderson's version of a nation as "imagined communities" should have included the account of nation as a collective identity. It is imperative to treat aspects of collectivity when trying to understand the concept of nation because the individual projects his existence into the collective.[89]

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[87] Anderson, B.: 1983, 22-46.
[88] Easthope, A.: 1999, 6-8.
[89] Easthope, A.. 1999, 8-11.

3.3. Nation as Real versus Nation as Spirit

It is widely supported among sociologists and historians that economic, social and political forces are real, while discourse, culture and identity are spiritual and subjective. Therefore, a difference between nation as "real" and nation as "imaginary" arises. National culture can be materialistic as they are produced through institutions, practices and traditions which one can describe, but it is also produced by narratives and discourses which are less obvious.[90]

[90] Easthope, A.: 1999, 11-12.

4. Nation and Culture

Defining a nation requires a definition of "collective identity". Easthope relates to Freud who noted that collective identity is a group identity defined over and against by what differs from it. Individuals in a group behave in many cases as if they were uniform. Members of a group identify with the same objects and so enter into a common identification with each other. Human beings need to belong to a group in order to define themselves as individuals. Born into practices and discourses of a particular culture, humans see its constructedness as natural[91]. Everyone encompasses a number of identities: family, work, leisure, ethnic identity, local or regional ones. The individual defines itself by multiple identifications. This is also Sigmund Freud's view when he says that:

> …each individual is a component part of numerous groups, he is bound by ties of identification in many directions, and he has built up his ego ideal upon the most various models. Each individual therefore has a share in numerous groups' minds – those of his race, of his class, of his creed, of his nationality, etc.[92]

In mid-nineteenth century European nationalism emerges as a political doctrine to unify and legitimizes the nation-state after the overthrow of monarchic states. The nation-state somehow brought back a lost unity and identification within a country. For Ireland, the nation building process was a very arduous development. The land was split between a rural subsistence economy and a maritime economy and all its resources and part of its people were deterritorialized. The Irish needed to reconcile politically with a self-governing Ireland before economic revival could be pursued. Irish nationalism needs to be seen differently from that of other countries' nationalism: Ireland could not define itself by advanced political cohesion (as was the case with France or America) but had to constitute its nationhood out of the actual loss of its identity. As Ireland lacks political cohesion and identity, the primary appeal is to prior cultural unity. The first

[91] Easthope, A.: 1999, 15- 19.
[92] Freud cit.in Easthope, A.: 1999, 23.

instance of defining a cultural unity is the language. The spirit of the nation can be identified with its language since it binds together a linguistic community.[93] But exactly the language causes a problem in Ireland. There had been two language communities, Irish and English, but the former of these had ceased by 1800 to be the dominant language. The loss of the national language is, besides other things, responsible for the discontinuities of the Irish people. Continuity had to be re-established. National consciousness was sought in historical research and politics but all the effort to create a popular unity in Ireland was once more impeded by the rebellion of 1848. Already because of the Famine, the Irish had to struggle with their lives and their land. The Rebellion of 1848 was not so much motivated by political reasons in Ireland than it was in the rest of Europe. In Ireland, 1848 was the aftermath of the Famine and once more demonstrated the total lack of unity in Ireland.[94]

Meinecke, a German historian distinguished the “cultural nation” from the “political nation”. The concept of a cultural nation implies that a nation is primarily based on its cultural heritage, whereas the political nation is based on the unifying concept of political history and constitution. The cultural nation, then, is the nation-state proper, meaning that the state arises from the nation. The cultural nation has existed since time immemorial and one is simply born into it. It ties a people together in terms of a common culture, a common ethnicity (history, language, religion, etc.). On the other hand, the political nation is the “state-nation”, established in many cases from top to bottom and characterized by a political community. Members choose freely if they want to be part of the community or not[95].

Historiography often goes hand in hand with nationalism as some of its founders have been leaders of the national revival. They constructed histories which provided the drive for a nation state. In Ireland, the father of modern Irish historiography was Eoin MacNeill, whose work on Ireland’s

[93] Lloyd, D.: 2003,160-163.
[94] Lloyd, D.: 2003,164-166.
[95] Kumar, K.: 2003, 21-23.

medieval Gaelic past reinforced mythologies of popular tradition that presented Ireland as an independent national civilisation that had fought for its independence for over 600 years against the English invaders. Earliest studies of nationalism centred in the field of politics with a historical outline of the role of certain individuals and revolutionary leaders like Parnell, Tone or Pearse. Critics then started to distance themselves from the concept of nation as understood in terms of a development in Irish history. Political history no longer legitimized the history of society and the history of a nation[96]. Certain characteristics of Irish nationalism recur from time to time: especially Tom Davis's (a revolutionary Irish writer belonging to the Young Irelanders) use of anti-materialism is a notion of Irish nationalism, claiming that the Irish distinguish themselves from the English by their moral superiority[97].

Images often carry political information which is also true of Ireland. Irish historians had and still have to decipher the meaning of images in a certain political context which, in the Irish context, is complicated by Irish history. Images used in Ireland's past are usually laden with ideological implications. Historians rather prefer to avoid images as they usually come with emotional baggage and tend to blur the facts of history[98]. The use of images was of central importance to Irish nationalists in the late 19th and early 20th century in order to win public support for the aim of achieving an independent Irish state. In particular, Irish monumental art from the 1860s onwards became more and more nationalistic and tried to sustain a populist Irish national identity. Images such as the harp, the Celtic cross, the wolfhound, allegorical figures that combined Christian and Celtic belief came to be standardized. These images helped to identify a unique sense of nation among the Irish people[99]. The images used rely on the mythic understanding of the Irish past but, as indicated above, historians rather prefer demythologized images as the irrational use of mythology could

[96] Hutchinson, J., 1996, 100-101.
[97] Foster, R.F.: 1993, 29.
[98] Moran, S.F.: 1999, 167.
[99] Moran, S.F.: 1999, 171.

create a false image of Irish national identity. Still, it is the Irish nationalist images which help us to understand Ireland's idea of a nation and tell us essential things about the Irish national faith[100].

The formation of a nation should not be seen as a static and final state but as a reversible and active process. Historians have to account for the fact that Irish nationalism is often an artificial device to sharply distinguish religious, agrarian and national goals, since Irish ethnicity has been closely related to religion and economic grievance[101]. Hutchinson argues in his conclusion about Irish nationalism that nationalism per se is "doomed because national identities are not contingent elite constructs but are rooted in modern social conditions and draw from an older ethnocultural heritage"[102].

It has been recognized that the dividing lines between historiographic and fictional, but realistic, writing are blurred. Fact and fiction coexist side-by-side and literary historians can deal with history in a more covert way than scholars of history. Literary historians have the chance to concentrate on themes and histories which have not been dealt with by scholars of history.[103] Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, or Elizabeth O'Hara as her pseudonym as a children's writer is stands in the tradition of literary history. Her trilogy about Sally Gallagher is set in Ireland at the time of Parnell and relates historical events with all the difficulties Irish society had to undergo at the turn of the century. The protagonist, young Sally, is doomed to lead a rather hard life as a child, encountering child labour and harsh economic standards. Many young people in 19th century Ireland lived like Sally but by picking out a fictional example, O'Hara embeds realistic fiction into an Irish historical context, making history even more personal to the reader. Furthermore, she conveys the importance of Irish cultural and national identity throughout the stories. Elizabeth O'Hara uses the past to recover seemingly lost stories

[100] Moran, S.F.: 1999, 174-176.
[101] Hutchinson, J., 1996, 112-117.
[102] Hutchinson, J., 1996, 117.
[103] Scheuringer, C., 2005, 17.

of the 19th and 20th centuries, which at the dawn of the Celtic Tiger – a time characterised by the denial of the past – was rather rare but enriched her great works and helped her to win several prizes in children's literature (The Bisto Book Award for *The Hiring Fair* and *Blaeberry Sunday*). By her realistic investigation of historical events, she establishes time frames and conflicting social systems at the heart of the protagonist's dilemma[104].

Elizabeth O'Hara creates a domestic world whose perspective is decidedly female – this accounts for the fact that in the trilogy of Sally male characters are of minor importance. Her stories provide an insight into Irish history and certain aspects of Irish cultural identity. Her trenchant social commentary on today's as well as Ireland's past is constantly delivered with humour and a touch of magic.[105] Elizabeth O'Hara's writing for children has to be seen in the cultural and historical context of Ireland to verify or falsify the assumption that already in childhood a national and cultural Irish identity are created. Motifs, backgrounds, themes, oral storytelling or settings will account for the cultural dimension of her work.

[104] Scheuringer, C., 2005, 21.
[105] Mahony Hunt, C., 1998, 259-261.

5. The Issue of Irish Cultural Identity – Aspects of Irishness

The Italian island, Sicily, has experienced a similar fate to Ireland: for many centuries it had not been part of continental Italy, and neither was it a country for itself. Invaders could easily intrude on it because of the sea, which is why many cultures found their way to Sicily – mostly as unwelcome invaders. This mix of cultures today constitutes the concept of "sicilianità". This concept defines the character which is common to all Sicilians. If there is such a concept for Sicilians, there may as well be one for the Irish – the so called "Irishness". The concept of Irishness encompasses the cultural identity of the Irish. Talking about Irishness and cultural identity, we shall define the concept of "cultural identity". The term "culture" can occur in a very broad context. Usually, it will be mentioned when it comes to define national identity. The unity of a nation, in most cases, is constituted by the same language, a collective mentality, a collective history and a similar lifestyle[106]. The individual identity of a person, then, arises within the person itself but is likewise determined by external influences and the collective identity of the country one lives in. The collective identity could be seen as a cultural project, developing along a symbolic system and a system of norms common to all members of the community. This means that individual identity is always connected to collective identity as the individual human being assumes his/her social role within a nation and a group of people[107].

The pillars on which the national and the cultural identity are based, include history, language and literature. The well-known Cultural Studies theorist Stuart Hall confirms that popular culture of a country is also based on experiences, memories and traditions of a nation. Therefore, this type of culture is closely related to hopes and expectations, tragedies and scenes of local people, which then constitute the daily experience of life of a

[106] Assmann, A.: 2006, 9.
[107] Assmann, A.: 2006, 215-20.

common people[108]. The popular culture of the Irish people is referred to in Elizabeth O'Hara's trilogy. Ways of life and traditions of people at a crucial time in Irish history are resuscitated by the author and several instances of Irishness can be discerned: the celebration of special traditions, the tradition of oral story-telling, myth-making, the importance of family relations, hard child labour in a time of economic crisis after the Famine, politics and the Parnell myth. All these factors constitute aspects of Irishness in the novels which also recur in the works of various other Irish authors.

Culture usually indicates a particular way of life, shared by a group of people and during a particular period. Ethnicity, for instance, is a component of cultural identity- at least people consider it as evidence for their distinctive identity. Ireland passed through several traditions of cultural identity and tradition in the period from 1886 to 1922. One outcome of these issues was the establishment of an independent national state, and hence an official Irish identity. The strong English influence made Ireland's Gaelic culture disappear especially because of a tide of Anglicisation. An Irish mind had to be established which turned out to be difficult as it seemed problematic to identify what exactly constituted Irish cultural particularity. David Patrick Moran gave a definition of what constituted Irishness or Irish cultural identity. For him the Irish nation was a Catholic nation with a Gaelic cultural base or matrix. Before fighting for an Irish Free State this matrix had to be strengthened and Ireland had to be understood as Gaelic-Catholic Ireland. This was the programme adopted by Gaelic leaders and Sinn Féiners who became important in shaping the ideology of the new Irish State in 1922[109]. Another important issue to be considered when discussing Irish cultural identity is the Irish language, which should be the vital instrument of cultural reconstruction. The language constitutes a special and privileged register of Irishness. This privilege derives from the

[108] Hall, S.: 2000, 102-103.
[109] Ó Tuathaigh, G., 1991, 54-58.

richness and antiquity of the cultural continuity which it testifies.[110] Douglas Hyde, Anglo-Irish scholar of the Irish language, defined the late 19th century crisis of the Irish: Irish people needed to be de-anglicised as their problem was constituted by a ceasing to be Irish without becoming English. Therefore, it was necessary to remind the Irish of their cultural heritage and to cultivate an Irish nation on Irish lines. Hyde highlighted the heritage of the Celtic language and Celtic customs. Another important element entering the process of recovery of Hibernitude and the revival of Irishness was the Roman Catholic Church. For a certain period of time, the definition of Irishness meant the native people of Ireland descended from Gaelic speakers, practising Catholic faith[111]. In the mid 1880s, Catholicism was a marker for an explicit Irish identity. Tom Burke, a Dominican preacher, in 1872 addressed the issue the following way:

> Take an average Irishman – I don't care where you find him – and you will find that the very first principle in his mind is 'I am not an Englishman because I'm Catholic!' Take an Irishman wherever he is found all over the earth, and any casual observer will at once come to the conclusion, 'Oh, he is an Irishman, he is Catholic'. The two go together.[112]

In particular the Irish rural and country town society of the late 19th century defined itself in Catholic terms – being a Catholic was seen as a substitute Irish identity as the linguistic and cultural identity was not so evident to the English people. Being a nationalist and a Catholic differentiated the Irish people from the English[113].

The massive abandonment of the Irish language in the 19th century is a special event in Irish cultural history. The bilingual society considered English as the progressive language whereas Irish was mostly spoken by the poor. The Great Famine decimated the number of Gaelic speakers in Ireland through death and emigration. English, instead, was spoken by the

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[110] Ó Tuathaigh, G., 1991, 69.
[111] Harkness, D.: 1988, 127-129.
[112] Burke, T. cit. in: Murphy, J.A.: 1988, 133.
[113] Murphy, J.A.: 1988, 134.

political leaders, by the Catholic bourgeoise and Anglo-Irish aristocracy[114]. One encounters class division by language right in the beginning of *The Hiring Fair* when Sally wonders about her mother's negotiations in English with a farmer when they discuss the conditions of hiring her daughters.

> […]: she was not used to hearing English spoken except by children and the teacher, in school. Irish was the language all ordinary grown-ups spoke at home.[115]

In the sequel to *The Hiring Fair*, *Blaeberry Sunday*, the cultural importance of the Gaelic language is made even clearer by the visit of a guest to the Gallagher's house who wants to learn the Gaelic language. As the woman, visiting from Dublin, arrives, Sally welcomes her in Irish but the visitor does not understand.

> Oh yes, the Gaelic. Of course you are speaking the Gaelic. I think I am too tired to learn any today. I'll start tomorrow. Oh, don't tell me that none of you can speak English? But of course you don't, you are true native Irish speakers…monoglots…charming, really….[116]

The visitor seems to think that Irish people are not educated enough to be capable of using English. Sally defends herself and her family by stating that all of them speak English as well.

Ireland is a country of cultural diversity which has produced varieties of Irishness. Leland Lyons in his book *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939*, describes the diverse status of the small island. Lyons explains that Irish cultural diversity

> has been a diversity of ways of life which are deeply embedded in the past and of which the much advertised political differences are but the outward and visible sign. This was the true anarchy that beset the country. During the period from the fall of Parnell to the death of Yeats, it was not primarily an anarchy of violence in the streets, of contempt for law and order such as to make the island, or any part of it, permanently ungovernable. It was rather an anarchy in

[114] Ó Tuathaigh, G.: 2005, 41-45.
[115] O'Hara, E.:, 1993, 36.
[116] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 72.

> the mind and in the heart, an anarchy which forbade not just unity of territories, but also ‘unity of being`, an anarchy that sprang from the collision within a small and intimate island of seemingly irreconcilable cultures, unable to live together or to live apart, caught inextricably in the web of their tragic history.[117]

From the cultural point of view there had always been the conflict between the values of the “city” (English) and the “country” (Irish). But at the turn of the century the Irish preferred to perceive themselves as “city-men” as well. Not as the grand bourgeoisie of England but as little bourgeois artisans living in provincial towns.[118] The question of Irishness and identity is mostly connected to religious and political issues, or religious issues turning into political ones. The sectarian conflict between Protestants and Catholics had been present throughout decades and continues to be so today. Cultural nationalism and the importance to perceive oneself as “Irish” probably emerged in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries when the dominant ecclesiastical and political institutions seemed to be powerless to the young religious and political intellectuals of that time.[119]

Over the past two hundred years the fact of either being Catholic or Protestant has dominated the question of Irish people’s lives. Religion has had an impact on diverse fields of daily life including businesses, shops and pubs. In Ireland, Catholics and Protestants indeed shared the same country but two different social worlds. Religion ties people of a community together as they share the same beliefs of reading, understanding and interpreting the world. Symbols and rituals connected to religion maintain the collective consciousness of a community[120]. Being Catholic or Protestant is a main feature of Irish national and cultural identity. Religious identity and heritage have remained strong even today but the development of a capitalist society, the growth of the state and the mass media have diminished its

[117] Foster, R.F.: 1993, 21-22.
[118] Foster, R.F.: 1993, 37.
[119] Foster, R.F.: 1993, 34-38.
[120] Inglis, T.: 2005, 59-60.

significance. Still, religion remains to be seen a strong marker for Irishness.[121]

Another important factor connected to Irishness is the concept of space or place. Johann Herder developed the idea throughout the 19th century that people and landscape are closely linked by a symbiotic relationship. In Ireland, too, the cultural nationalism of the 19th century was linked to a secure relationship to place. Matters of space have always been an issue in the formation of Irish character and culture[122]. In Ireland the division of space plays a crucial role when it comes to define differences between “city” and “country”. In lrish literature one will find a reciprocal relationship between the two concepts, structuring the imagination of space[123]. During the 19th century Irish cultural nationalism fostered the idea of the “country” as a signifier of Irishness. Rural values were positioned against urban values, often isolating Ireland from England. In Irish cultural nationalism the truly national was associated with the natural, thus not the city, but the country, which led to the embracement of a typical pastoral myth where the Irish rural population were represented as the true nationalists. Irish novelists deal with the discourse of country versus city, the myth of pastoral life, in their writing.[124] A further marker for Irishness in Irish writings of the past as well as today is the tradition of Gaelic non realist narrative (supernatural and magical ancient tales and myths). The main interest lies in the ancient Gaelic tradition of the otherworld, meaning the world of the fairy race, who allegedly ruled Ireland before the Celts came to Ireland. W.B. Yeats was one of the first to engage in traditional Gaelic writing and reintroduced the ancient narrative culture to Irish literature. After Yeats, this tradition became an important part in the process of becoming an Irish writer. There are three things which particularly account for the

[121] Inglis, T.: 2005, 74-75.
[122] Smyth, G.: 2001, 20.
[123] Smyth, G.: 2001, 76.
[124] Smyth, G.: 1997, 58-62.

Gaelic tradition: visions, humour and magic. These three traditional features are usually reflected in the works of Irish writers[125].

Mythological tales and legends reveal a deep fascination with landscape and with humankind's role in nature. The Gaelic language offers itself perfectly to tell its own tales with its peculiar naming of places, individuals and events. The individual is born into a relationship with the local landscape. Therefore, the term "land" is of great importance to the cultural identity of the Irish. Especially in the 19th century, in the predominantly agrarian society, deprivation of "land" was considered alienation from being Irish.[126] In *The Hiring Fair* such a mythological tale is evoked by an older man of the country community who starts recollecting the story of a young boy rescuing a princess from a dragon. O'Hara describes the strong connection between the Irish people and their love for fairy stories with the simple sentence "It was as if he, too, were reluctant to leave the magic world he had been describing and return to mundane existence."[127] The other world is part of the community and it seems as if the spirit of the ancient Gaelic world never left the individuals' soul.

[125] Smyth, G.: 1997, 50-52.
[126] Smyth. G.: 1997, 166-167.
[127] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 28.

5.1. Politics as an Aspect of Irishness in O'Hara's Novels

Another important marker of Irish cultural and national identity is the politics of the country. Elizabeth O'Hara evokes the story of a time in which an important myth of Irish politics had been generated: the Parnell myth. Irish politics had been a struggle to free Ireland from the British Empire and was characterised by the constant discussion about being a Catholic or Protestant.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Catholics still had to encounter many restrictions in Ireland. Every attempt to foster the Catholics political stand remained unsuccessful until 1823 when Daniel O'Connell, an Irish lawyer, democratised the Catholic Association. The Association not only tried to achieve Catholic Emancipation but also represented interests of the tenant farmers. O'Connell changed the political situation for Catholics and soon had the support of Catholics of all classes. In 1828 he achieved a great victory when he stood for parliament and secured twice as many votes as the sitting member. Because of his oath of allegiance, he couldn't take the seat but his success forced Prime Minister Wellington to take action: in 1829 the Catholic Relief Bill was passed. During the next twelve years of O'Connell's governmental actions, a number of reforming measures were taken. With the return of the Conservative Government in 1841, O'Connell launched another popular agitation: the annulment of the union between Ireland and Britain[128].

By founding the National Repeal Association, O'Connell obtained a lot of support by the local clergy. The problem was that many of his supporters of Catholic Emancipation had been British politicians who could not support by any means the repeal of the union between the countries. O'Connell, trying to avoid any kind of bloodshed, cancelled an important meeting in 1843. This was the first sign of the weakened Association. The number of members declined and with O'Connell's death in 1847 the

[128] Dudley Edwards, R., 1981, 101-103.

movement collapsed as a whole. The Young Irelanders, who followed O'Connell's beliefs, soon became extreme nationalists and rebels. This finally led to the rebellion of 1848. The repeal of the union was a non-issue until in 1870 Isaac Butt started his Home Rule campaign. The Protestant barrister founded the Home Rule League which won 59 seats in 1874 but still needed a charismatic leadership. This charismatic person was to be Charles Stewart Parnell, Irish Protestant Landlord, who became leader in 1880[129]. No other man has ever moved the scene of British democratic politics so profoundly as Parnell. He brought back a great social revolution in British history: the change in relations between landlords and tenants. The small tenant farmers lived very much like at the time of the Famine. Two social shock waves hit Ireland in the 1870s which signified for the small farmers big problems: they could not pay their rent any longer. A Fenian named Michael Davitt founded together with Parnell the Land League, which tried to help support the homesteads and possessions of the farmers. Parnell's vitality in the following land war brought him to leadership of the Irish Party[130].

William Gladstone, Prime Minister of the day, had begun to introduce legislation to protect the Irish tenant farmers, but still was of the strong opinion that law and order in the country had to be restored. Therefore, he introduced a fierce "Coercion Bill" which gave special powers to the military and the police, suspending some of the civil liberties. Parnell fought this Bill but he and his party members were suspended from the House of Commons by sergeant-at-arms. At the same time Gladstone introduced a bill to reform the Irish land system. The bill became law and although Parnell knew these were excellent long needed reforms, he refused to accept it from an English prime minister. The fierce dislike between the two men reached its climax in a speech at Leeds when Gladstone attacked Parnell for the ambivalence of his language. Of course, Parnell replied to the verbal offences and was arrested in Kilmainham. Negotiations between

[129] Dudley Edwards, R., 1981, 105-107.
[130] Kee, R., 1980, 119-124.

Gladstone and Parnell were carried on while his stay at Kilmainham and finally he was released in 1882[131].

Parnell joined his party with the Liberals in order to defeat the Conservative government and allowed Gladstone to form a government in 1886. The alliance between the Home Rule Party and the Gladstonian Liberals continued until the O'Shea divorce[132] action in 1890, which split the party[133]. The fact that there should be a divorce and the question of what to do with Parnell occupied people's minds. The party split into Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites and the issue of Home Rule fell into second place. His health deteriorated with all the struggles he had to undergo. He suffered from a kidney disease and at his last meeting in County Galway, in 1891, he stood there crippled by rheumatism and bareheaded. He finally died on 6 October 1891 at his house. Any aspirations for Home Rule as a final settlement were buried with him.[134]

5.2. The Parnell Myth

Somehow, after Parnell's death a myth began to develop. He became the symbol of nationality which links him to the people he represents. He even is referred to as Ireland's uncrowned king[135]. Parnell's qualities as a national leader are constantly evoked, which again reinforces the bond between the people and the leader. His symbolic kingship binds him and his people together and he becomes a myth, a national legend[136]. It was the press and particularly the newspapers' political illustrations that strengthened the meaning of the Parnell myth over time. Graphic depiction helped nationalists to interpret Parnell's conduct as the leader of the Irish

[131] Kee, R., 1980, 124-129.
[132] Katherine O'Shea was still married to Captain William O'Shea but Parnell and Katherine had a close liaison. The case was treated by a law court and thus intimacies of the couple were published by the press. The effect this had on Catholic Ireland was devastating (Kee,R.: 1980, 132-135).
[133] Dudley Edwards, R., 1981, 107-108.

[134] Kee, R., 1980, 132-135.
[135] Murphy, W.M., 1986, 39.
[136] Murphy, W.M., 1986, 61.

nationalists. The depictions were reinforced by a series of symbols and details concerning Irish people and Irish culture, like the landscape or the nation's past, and they signified the meaning of the Parnell myth: his dignity[137], his equality with British statesmen, his independence and his embodiment of the hope of the Irish people[138]. Even after his death Parnellites would continue to glorify him and further strengthened the myth of Charles Stewart Parnell, who died in the pursuit of legislative independence for Ireland. His role as a martyr for the Irish people eventually resulted in myth-making[139].

Historians and cultural critics tried to place the Parnell myth[140] in the shaping of national memory. The attitude of Parnell's self-confidence was reflected in Irish nationalist illustrations. Nationalists now saw themselves reflected in Parnell's dignity, independence and equality. From this time on nationalist illustrators tried to depict ordinary Irish people in the fashion of Parnell: as respectable, upstanding individuals who did not need to bow their head to authority[141].

Illustrators, in the case of Parnell, contributed to the myth-making and influenced the development of the Irish national consciousness and memory. The illustrations of Parnell, which reinforced the myth, were

> a principal means by which Irish people, as active participants in a shared historical process, understood themselves,

[137] His dignity was mostly illustrated and reinforced by the relationship with the Irish people. One the one hand, Parnell was the political leader, acting out the role of the statesman. On the other hand, he was depicted as a labourer working for the Irish people. The combination of the two images of Parnell fortified his myth and guaranteed him the sympathy of the Irish people. The representations of equality and dignity in connection with his persona were even more enhanced by the depiction of his political strategies, cooperating with British leaders while remaining at the same time independent (McBride, L.W.:1999, 78-88).
[138] McBride, Lawrence W., 1999, 73.
[139] McBride, L.W.:1999, 78-88.
[140] This myth serves as an agent in nationalist political and intellectual life. Opinions as to the significance of the Parnell myth differ. Some critics say his symbolic and mythical appearance (as a statesman, a friend, a political genius) only clouds his real political achievements. Others argue that the combination of his public and private life gave the myth its power (McBride, L.W: 1999, 92-94).
[141] McBride, L.W: 1999, 92-94.

> assessed their leaders and sustained their hopes as a society and a nation[142].

Not only illustrations reinforced the myth of Charles Stewart Parnell but also in Irish writing one finds powerful attempts at glorifying national leaders as heroes.[143]

Politics find its ways into the writing of Elizabeth O'Hara's children's stories. Throughout the trilogy Sally Gallagher is entangled with Irish politics especially in her daily life in rural Ireland and in Dublin at the dawn of the 20th century when she goes to meetings of the Gaelic League. The latter is mentioned for the first time in *Blaeberry Sunday* when the visitor of the Gallaghers describes its aims. This may already be a foreshadowing of Sally's interest in participating in the activities of the Gaelic League once she has moved to Dublin.

> It will be a society to promote Irish language and culture, you know, to restore to Ireland its true heritage, so long derided by the conqueror. They will hold night classes and organise other cultural activities, I don't know what exactly. It will be very important. It is, they say, the most important thing to happen in Ireland in centuries.[144]

Elizabeth O'Hara intentionally makes use of Irish history to make (children) readers aware of the country's past and foster their sense of cultural and national identity.

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[142] McBride, L.W: 1999, 94.
[143] Deane, S.: 2003, 14-17.
[144] O'Hara, 1994, 77.

6. The Hiring Fair

6.1. Plot

Elizabeth O'Hara's first novel of the trilogy, *The Hiring Fair*, introduces the Sally Gallagher's life in Ireland of the year 1893. The plot of the narrative, rendered by an omniscient narrator, centres around Sally's experiences as a hired girl, away from her family and the hardships the young heroine has to endure. Plot, according to Peter Barry, "is those events as they are edited, ordered, packaged, and presented in what we recognise as a narrative"[145].

Elizabeth O'Hara examines the young girl's situation in "this remote Donegal glen"[146] in Ireland, far away from the city of Dublin. At first, the child reader is introduced to a peaceful rural life of a typical farming family at the turn of the century. Sally is presented as a dreamer who loves to read books, borrowing them from her schoolteacher Miss Lynch. Furthermore, she starts to have feelings for her best friends' brother: Manus. The reader encounters an idyllic rural scene until Sally's father dies. The family suddenly sees itself confronted with financial problems. Sally's mother has to make a hard decision: she hires her two oldest girls, Katie and Sally, to two different farmers from a village called Ballygowl, Robert Campell and William Stewart. Sally and her sister Katie are separated from each other and have to undergo child labour at their new homes. Sally learns to take responsibility for her actions during the time with the Stewarts as she has to take care of the children and the household. When Mrs. Stewart, after having given birth to another child, gets very sick, Sally assumes the role of a mother for the Stewart children. That is the moment when she realises she has grown and changed. When Mrs. Stewart starts feeling better the girls are allowed to go home for Christmas day to see their family. The first novel ends with the girls' hearts full of joy to finally get

[145] Barry, P.: 1995, 223.
[146] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 2.

home and see their mother, their little sister and their friends before the will have to return to Ballygowl for work again.

This is the plot in a nutshell, but of course Sally encounters a lot of particular situations by which she is unconsciously forced to grow and acquire an identity. Elizabeth O'Hara makes use of a typical feature of children's literature when she engages the reader in the heroine's quest for identity, allowing her make mistakes on her own. To keep suspense at the highest, she creates adventurous scenes for the young reader. For instance, when Sally discovers footprints in the snow and hears voices around the house while she is alone with the Stewarts' children. Of course, she is madly frightened as she had been told the legend of a girl who killed her baby before it had been baptised.

> One night, around Christmas, everyone else on the farm went off to a dance. The girl didn't go, because she had nothing nice to wear, so she stayed at home, alone, keeping watch in the house. Around midnight she heard a scraping sound on the door. A high, thin, child's voice sang.[147]

Sally instantly knows it must be the dead child. O'Hara draws the child reader into Sally's adventure as if he was part of the story and transfers an old Glenbra legend to him. Sally's anxiety is projected onto the reader until he finds out in a relief that it is not the dead child haunting the house, but "Silly Billy", the boy from the grocer's shop in Ballygowl. Until the moment of revelation, the young reader is left in the dark, which is exactly O'Hara's intention. Suspense and adventure in the life of the heroine is a typical feature of children's novels and O'Hara excels at it. Moreover, she establishes the Irish identity of a young girl by referring to particular Irish legends or historical events Sally has to put up with. The sense of security children need to experience had been taken away from Sally as she has to work as a hired girl. The girl seeks that security by reading her books.

[147] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 141.

> At the moment Sally was in the mood for books about children with happy lives. She wanted to escape into their wonderful, luxurious world and experience it even at second-hand.[148]

Thus, Sally has to acquire her identity on her own without the security of her home and her family. Children readers love to imagine themselves as strong heroes or heroines who are able to endure the hardships of life and learn from their own mistakes.

Concerning Irish history, O'Hara relies on the Parnell myth to revive the time at which the leader was most popular. Sally grasps fragments of his life here and there, his divorce is discussed in the Stewart family and the priest of Ballygowl favours Parnell and his party even in his sermons. The third person narrative recounts the priest's sermon until suddenly internal focalisation is applied.

> Will you for God's sake stop, thought Sally. I've got more important matters than Parnell to attend to. I don't have a vote. Most of the people in this church don't have a vote for one reason or another. Most of them haven't even enough land to be allowed to vote. Or else they're women and they can't vote at all, no matter how rich they are. Or they're too young. Sally was all three of them. Too young, too poor and a woman.[149]

The child reader gains insight into the problems of the poor hired girl and is forced to make up his mind about the historical situation of those days. Several other arguments about Parnell and Home Rule are brought up by O'Hara and transferred to Sally's life. This is the way by which O'Hara emotes history and by that creates an Irish identity. Not only Parnell is mentioned throughout the story but also the importance of Catholicism. Hereby, O'Hara emphasizes the importance of the Irish past and tradition, establishing certain aspects of Irish identity to which the child reader learns to relate to as he relives the heroine's story. Cultural identity plays an important part in the case of Sally and by involving many cultural aspects of

[148] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 126.
[149] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 60.

Irishness in her children's novels, it seems as if O'Hara would like to foster the child reader's view of the importance of cultural identity.

6.2. Reappearing Characters

As mentioned several times before, Sally personifies the typical heroine for child readers. She is a strong young girl slowly becoming a woman, finding her way through the mesh of confusion as an adult. She does not rely on what her mother, or friends, tell her to do but makes her own mistakes. Elizabeth O'Hara directly describes the appearance of her main character in order to help the child reader's imagination. As children need to picture their heroes or heroines, O'Hara gives details about Sally's colour of hair, clothes etc. In fact, all the characters introduced are explicitly described by the narrator.

> When Katie came in, she looked very pretty, too, in her red dress. But she was not as beautiful as Sally. Her light brown hair and rather pale, watery features were no match for her sister's brown eyes, sallow skin, and raven-black hair.[150]

The description of Sally's beauty slightly reminds of the physical appearance of Snow White in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The beautiful princess is depicted having rose-red lips, skin as white as snow and ebony hair. Elizabeth O'Hara does not use the same words but Sally's raven-black hair and sallow skin could be an intertextual reference to Snow White.

In comparison to her sister Katie, Sally is a rather round character, who is individualized a lot. She depends on her own ideas and wants to find her way, although she sometimes lives in a world of dreams. This is the reason for her family to call her "Scatterbrain Sally". As Abrams says "a round character is complex in temperament and motivation, and is represented with subtle particularity"[151], Sally disposes of exactly this

[150] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 12.
[151] Abrams, M.H.: 1999, 33.

individual and complex temperament. Her sister Katie, however, presents a flat character. She is built around the single idea and quality of the perfect housekeeper: “Katie was a useful daughter to have around the house.”[152] Katie does not ask to discover the world – she is simple and satisfied with what she has. In the sequel to *The Hiring Fair*, Katie even chooses being a hired girl freely as she wants to collect money for her dowry.

Sally’s mother is a caring woman although she might appear coldhearted sending her daughters away for six months of child labour. The situation forced her to act this way because, otherwise, she and her children would have lost their home after her husband’s death. In fact, it breaks her heart to let them go under such circumstances which is evidenced by the stream of tears running down her cheeks at the moment the girls are setting off with their new employers.

Miss Lynch, Sally’s teacher, is another kind of mother figure for the heroine, but Miss Lynch is more of a secret idol and impresses Sally with her intelligence and books. The teacher is aware of Sally’s potentials and would love to foster them, but she is also aware of the financial situation of the family. Miss Lynch has to let Sally go, but is going to be one of her most important advisors in the sequel to *The Hiring Fair*.

Manus and Maura are two of Sally’s friends. In fact, Manus is Maura’s brother who Sally falls in love with. At the beginning, Maura is the one Sally can talk to best, but develops into a very different direction while Sally is away being a hired girl. In *Blaeberry Sunday* we shall see that Maura has become a snobbish young woman, surrounding herself with rich people and going to rich people’s school. Whereas, Manus develops to be at Sally’s centre of interest, both of them falling in love. Miss Lynch points out that people, over years, mature and change. This seems to be O’Hara’s message for her child readers, preparing them for reality by stating that change is a fundamental part of growing up and as people often choose

[152] O’Hara, E.: 1993, 6.

different ways, friendships are going to be lost while new ones will be found.

6.3. Settings

> The setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs; the setting of an episode or scene within a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place[153].

We shall look at the "general locale" and the "historical time" in Elizabeth O'Hara's trilogy about Sally Gallagher. According to Abrams, it is of importance to take into consideration the geographical setting as much as the historical time and its social circumstances as to figure out the given context of the story.

6.3.1. Geographical Settings

As discussed earlier on, it was rural life and nature which was associated with Irish national identity. Therefore, the country was rather considered an item of national identity than the city. The country is part of the Irish cultural background and presents itself as a marker of Irishness. In *The Hiring Fair* the setting is predominately in the country – to be exact: in the "remote Donegal glen"[154], in a place that is called Glenbra. Right at the beginning of the story, the scene concentrates on Sally sitting in the trees, only a few metres away from their house and the "chickens cackling in the farmyard"[155]. It is a description of rural life and the peace it is associated with. Elizabeth O'Hara not only draws attention to the peaceful rural life but also to the stressful and hard labour of a farmer in 19th century Ireland. Hereby, she describes locations and places of the farms in detail which underlines the importance of place and land for the Irish. Irishness again

[153] Abrams, M.H.: 1981,175.
[154] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 2
[155] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 2.

depends on a stable and secure relationship to place[156]. Houses and homes are of fundamental importance for people in order to structure their lives and acquire an identity. A stable place is part of a humans' individual identity. Edward Relph considers the importance of a home or house as the following:

> Such places are indeed foundations of man's existence, providing not only the context for all human activity, but also security and identity for individuals and groups. We can change places, move, but this is still to look for a place, for this we need as a base to set down Being and to realise our possibilities – a *here* from which the world discloses itself, a *there* to which we can go. Without such relationships, human existence, while possible, is bereft of much of its significance[157].

The significance of place in Ireland is related to the relationship of the early Irish pagan society to nature, which is still made explicit in Irish place-names today[158]. Interestingly enough, Elizabeth O'Hara renounces the use of the Irish place names in *The Hiring Fair*. She does not use the Irish name of Donegal (Dhún na nGall) or other places, as she had done it before in her collection of short stories *Midwife to the Fairies*. Still, the relation to space and Irish nature is present in her description of the country or places.

> As the rugged costal landscape gave way to small level fields of green grass, as the low heather-covered hills of Donegal vanished behind her and the high blue mountains of Tyrone came into view on the horizon, she forgot her fear of the future and began to relish the present experience thoroughly[159].

Throughout the tale, O'Hara describes places and situations Sally and her sister Katie find themselves in. Most of the time, the places described are connected with farm life and the home (e.g. kitchen). The reader sees Sally working in the house, helping the lady of the farm. Places and activities are described in order to make the reader preceive the hard tasks Sally had to perform over the day.

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[156] Nash, C.: cit. in. Smyth, G.: 2001, 20.
[157] Relph, E. cit. in. Smyth, G.: 2001, 3.
[158] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, pp. 36.
[159] O'Hara, E.: 1993, pp. 43.

> She would have to cook the porridge and set the table for breakfast. Then she'd have to go out to the byre and milk the cows, of which there were six. […] Afterwards, she would make all the beds, sweep the floor and clean the house. Then it would be time to prepare the potatoes for dinner. After dinner there would be various tasks to perform: they churned once a week, there was spinning to do at all times, bread to be baked every second day, large quantities of sewing and mending.[160]

Another typical marker of Irishness is the devotion to religion. The latter is part of the Irish cultural identity and Elizabeth O'Hara mentions going to church as an important Sunday activity for Catholics as well as Protestants. The church is seen as a place, which is established as a firm basis in Irish cultural life. O'Hara relates to the church and its importance for Sally whereby she subtly conveys a treat of Irishness to her child readers.

> She ran downstairs two steps at a time and prepared breakfast for the Stewarts, who would eat before going to their own church or "kirk" as they called it. […] She arrived at Ballygowl at five minutes to nine. The tiny Catholic church was at the far end of the town, at the opposite end from the Presbyterian chapel, which looked down over the main street from a high windy hill. […..] Inside, the place was packed, women sitting at one side and men at the other. There were some empty places in a pew about three rows up, so she slid into one of them.[161]

As to what constitutes the importance of a place to call home for the individual's identity, O'Hara emphasizes this importance especially for children. Home is a place of security and although the Stewarts, who hired Sally, are good and nice employers, the place called home will always be the place where your family is. In particular when one is talking about children who need the family as their security network.

> They were much too emotional to speak. Home. They were going home for Christmas. Tomorrow they would be sitting at their own fireside, eating goose and plum pudding with their mother, playing with little Janey. […] They were able to let themselves feel

[160] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 47-48.
[161] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 58-59.

> everything that was in their hearts. And what they felt was pure joy[162].

Obviously, the word “home” is emphasized to a great extent. The force of the word is then underlined by mentioning places of their “own”, places they can feel at home. The necessity of children of feeling close to their family is underlined by “eating plum pudding with their mother”. Sally and her sister feel pure joy as to what constitutes their identity: home with their family and their own place to live.

6.3.2. Historical Time

In *The Hiring Fair* the reader is introduced to late 19th century Ireland with all its troubles after the time of the Famine. We shall claim that Elizabeth O’Hara wants to convey to the child reader a national consciousness, the sense of what it means to be Irish and to dispose of an Irish cultural identity. It shall be looked at what kind of historical events the author introduces to impart a national knowledge to the reader.

As O’Hara uses the background of farm life and the difficulties farming people had to put up with after the Famine, the historical context evolves around the time of Parnell and Home Rule.

Parnell for most of the people came to be seen as their saviour whereas for William Stewart, Sally’s employer, the politician constitutes a nightmare. In fact, Stewart is the president of the Orange Lodge, which was a branch of the Orange Order, representing Protestant people wishing to remain united with Great Britain. O’Hara points out the conflict between Catholics and Protestants as well as the conflict between Home Rule and remaining a part of Britain. Although Stewart is a farmer himself, he does not conform with any of the plans Parnell has for Ireland. Furthermore, O’Hara points out that the political decisions might have been important for

[162] O’Hara, E.: 1993, 159.

the Irish people and should have been positively acknowledged, but she also depicts the real people with their problems, who do not seem to engage in all the political reality because it is far away from their homes.

The confrontation with everyday life and hard work does not make them consider the political ongoings as important enough. This is undermined by Sally's thoughts when she ponders about the whole situation of the Stewart's family life.

> All that fuss and crisis about Parnell and Home Rule. It seemed to Sally that it had very little to do with real life. With Mrs. Stewart in the hospital, with Emily, gazing greedily at the plate of scones and for the moment forgetting her problems, with Sally herself, on hire for six months, far away from her home….. […..] The goings-on of Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea and the Irish Party, the question of Home Rule or no Home Rule, seemed so very distant and irrelevant.[163]

The historical background of the time is presented from the heroine's point of view, who is not yet sure if any change for Ireland would be better or not. The heroine does not dispose of a national connection to her country yet, her national identity has not been established by then. She finds herself in a struggle of what to accept and what to believe, which again is typical for a heroine of a children's novel.

6.3.3. Social backgrounds

Irish society has been defined by the concept of family with the mother at the core of the Irish home, while the father is placed over the woman in a patriarchal society and has to nourish the family.[164] At the beginning of *The Hiring Fair* the family is introduced as "having just about enough of everything"[165]. The typical social roles in the family are revealed when the narrator explains that Jack Gallagher farms twenty acres of land and does a lot of fishing as a second income, while the role of the mother is defined as the housekeeper who spans, sows, bakes, cooks and looks after

[163] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 127.
[164] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 74.
[165] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 5.

the children in the beginning. In her children's novel Elizabeth O'Hara turns the family situation upside down: After the death of the father, the mother has to take over all the responsibility and has to arrive at the decision to send her children away for work in order to survive.

Furthermore, the Gallaghers belong to the poorer families in Donegal which is stated in the first chapter of O'Hara's novel:

> That was the way things were. Some people were rich and some people were poor and some people were beggars. That was life. You had to put up with it.[166]

Another important social background encountered in O'Hara's children's novel is the traditional conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism. Sally's family is Catholic which could be considered as one of the strongest markers of Irishness. Particularly, Sally's grandmother disposes of Catholic traits by always using her rosary and making references to God. In general, the Gallagher parents are described as "bringing God into everything"[167]. The force of Catholic tradition becomes even clearer in *Blaeberry Sunday*, when the Gallagher family is the host of a Protestant visitor. But this will be referred to in the analysis of the second novel.

The differences between Protestants and Catholics are depicted by the conflicts between Home Rule and the Orange Lodge as well. Although Parnell was a Protestant, he fought for the rights of Catholic Ireland which was not welcomed by the Protestant landlords. The negative reaction towards a change in Ireland is represented by William Stewart.

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[166] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 5.
[167] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 11.

6.3.4. Aspects of Irishness and Myth in *The Hiring Fair*

As Elizabeth O'Hara engages in Folklore Studies and is known to refer a lot to Irish traditional tales and fairies in her adult fiction, we shall examine if she makes use of markers of Irishness in her children's novels as well. The claim that she tries to convey national consciousness and cultural identity to her young readers at an early age, might be supported by the fact that she employs Irish traditional tales in *The Hiring Fair* and its sequels.

Elizabeth O'Hara remarks that when an old person dies, people like to dance, sing and party in Ireland at a wake, but when Sally's father died, people would not cling to their traditions as his death came unexpectedly. This is the first hint of Irishness introduced when it comes to traditions in *The Hiring Fair*. Furthermore, she presents the tradition of "meitheal", where a group of people gathers together to perform agricultural tasks as harvesting or thrashing. Since Jack Gallagher died and left five women (Mrs. Gallagher, Katie, Sally, Janey and Granny) alone with agricultural work, the people of the town come to help the family. The "meitheal" is an exciting event for Sally since there is a lot of activity which helps her get her mind off of the death of her father. O'Hara, by mentioning the meitheal, additionally gives an insight to the strong solidarity of the Irish community at that time.

It is also the meitheal giving way to the first Irish legend, which was already referred to at an earlier stage of this thesis, when Skinny Joe recounts the tale of the princess and the dragon. The magic world and fairy-tales are an important part of Irish cultural identity, which is underlined by this story. In fact, the oral tradition of storytelling is another marker of Irishness. Storytelling belongs to one of the oldest traditions which already had been performed during the days of the Celts.

When Sally and her sister Katie are hired to the farmers William Stewart and Robert Campbell, Katie gets acquainted with Robert's mother and speaks of her "evil eye". In Katie's opinion the woman gives her rather eery feelings because she often sits in her chair and speaks spells out loud. Here, O'Hara recounts the fear of witches and being cursed by a magical being, which is again a strong marker of Irishness. Not that this belief would not be part of other cultures as well, but the Irish seem to have a strong sense of the supernatural and tend to believe in their legends and fairies, which allows the legends to enter everyday life and shape the consciousness of the people.

By describing the first days of snow in *The Hiring Fair*, O'Hara gives insight into how the Irish imagine Fairyland – at least, into how Sally as a child imagines it.

> The whole countryside was deep in gleaming, brilliant snow. The fields, the houses, the trees were all covered in it. In the quite morning light they glittered and gleamed. Fairyland.[168]

The most uncanny moment for Sally, and probably the strongest reference to the belief that an assassinated person, who is not baptised, cannot find peace, is when Sally hears scraping sounds at the door and a child's voice singing. She instantly knows that this can only be the baby, which had been killed by its young mother before it was baptised. The child is singing a rhime to her mother:

> Mother mine, fold, fold,
> Do not fear the cold, cold!
> I will give you a shawl so thin
> For you to go dancing in![169]

The young reader can imagine the horrors of Sally but at the same time it is never revealed if this was just made up in Sally's mind in her state of fear or if the awakening of a legend might have really been possible.

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[168] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 143.
[169] O'Hara, E.: 1993, 141.

It is only the first novel of O'Hara's trilogy but the reader is drawn into a world of Irish habits, cultural manners, history as well as legends and myth. Throughout all the three novels O'Hara keeps her Irish heritage alive and involves the young reader in an exciting world full of cultural identity that may unconsciously be acquired by the reader.

7. Blaeberry Sunday

7.1. Plot

The sequel to *The Hiring Fair* celebrates the return of the two oldest Gallagher girls, Sally and Katie. The reader finds himself still in Ireland, in the year 1893 with the hottest summer "anyone in the north west of Ireland had ever experienced".[170] Sally is almost sixteen years old now and *Blaeberry Sunday* centres around her first love with Manus McLoughlin. His sister Maura, having been Sally's best friend, has changed a lot over the two winters Sally had been away working as a hired girl. Maura's and Manus' father has become a rich shopkeeper, a fact, which seems to have spoilt Maura a little too much. The two girls do not get along well with each other any longer, especially when Maura learns that her brother Manus is in love with Sally. Maura wants Manus to be going out with Eileen Carr, a new friend of hers and the daughter of the country doctor. Despite all of Maura's talking, Manus and Sally keep seeing each other. *Blaeberry Sunday* is a story of first loves, particularly pointing out the one between Manus and Sally. Still, Sally has to experience heartbreak and suffering in the end, as Manus decides to see Eileen Carr after his summer holidays, being a person that only relies on his family. His family would probably not want to see him with Sally, the poor farmer's girl.

Another important highlight in *Blaeberry Sunday* is the arrival of Ms. Geraldina Bannister, a visitor from Dublin, who is staying at the Gallagher's house for one month to learn Irish. Elizabeth O'Hara introduces her as a

[170] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 1.

lady of the city which pictures the conflict between Irish country and Irish city.

The author also introduces other cultures with the character of Olaf, an Icelandic acrobat who travels with fairs and whom Sally gets to know when Katie decides to go on a hiring fair. He becomes a good friend of her, even something like her new advisor when things become hard with Manus. Sally's family is completely being rebuilt when her mother marries Packy Doherty, a farmer, who is going to be the new leader of the Gallagher house. With *Blaeberry Sunday* Elizabeth O'Hara excels at describing the sentiments of a young heroine becoming a young adolescent: Sally experiences her first love, her first heartbreak, learns that people do not always change for the better, gets wiser with the help of an Icelandic boy, learns about Dublin and the Gaelic League and what differences there are between country and city people and unfortunately, again is confronted with death.

In comparison with the *The Hiring Fair*, *Blaeberry Sunday* takes the things out of Sally's hands. The coming of age in O'Hara's second novel is more intensively experienced by the young reader as the author keeps filtering Sally's emotions more clearly. The reader gets an insight into the problematic status of finding one's identity, having to choose between love and leaving the country to experience oneself. Sally grows because of her own strength, but also because of the influences of other people like Olaf, the visitor Ms. Bannister and Miss Lynch.

Once more, O'Hara excels at the description of Sally's quest for identity, making her an unforgettable heroine for the child reader as the latter is drawn closely into every adventure of the story. For the reader, Sally is an interesting character because she never gives up, but still her difficulties in deciding which way to choose are mirrored throughout the novel.

As pointed out at the beginning of this thesis, children's literature often contains morals. O'Hara is very cautious with including morals into her children's novels which makes the reading even more likeable. It is much more an instruction to freely choose one's own way and to make decisions on one's own as this really prepares you for life. The only moral she might like to pass on to her readers, is, that only by making one's own mistakes children grow and figure out their identities. Maybe it would even be better not to call this a" moral" but rather a "good advice".

The language O'Hara uses is a very visual one and for the child reader easy to grasp. The short sentences and easy phrases help to be engrossed in the story as it should be when it comes to children's literature. Furthermore, the author again makes use of traditional settings and explains backgrounds of the Irish past. The child reader is drawn into a world which, on the one hand, fosters his imagination and, on the other hand, strengthens his perception for the Irish past, thus he will be aware of a national identity for the country.

7.2. Geographical Settings

As the trilogy unfolds, the setting once more is in Ireland, in the country of Donegal in 1893. While it was winter in the first novel, *Blaeberry Sunday* pictures the warmest summer in the north west of Ireland.

We have already talked about the importance of place in this thesis before, and thus, exactly this importance of place will be carried over to the sequel of *The Hiring Fair*. The reader is introduced to Sally's return at the house of the Gallagher's, which is precisely described by the author to illustrate once more the importance of the home for Irish people.

> The chickens clucked and pecked among the mossy cobbles and the stone wall that surrounded the yard which was bordered by thousands of late primroses. The house itself looked just as friendly

> as always, its red door like a rosy mouth, its two windows like two eyes winking at you inviting you to share a joke.[171]

Not only that the Gallagher house is described in detail but it even is personified by the narrator. A lot of actions in *Blaeberry Sunday* are set at the Gallagher house, particularly when it comes to describing the scenes with the visitor, Geraldina Bannister.

Another important setting, which belongs to the strong sense of home the Irish have, is the kitchen. The kitchen, like in *The Hiring Fair*, is again the place where the family meets and conversation takes place. The Gallagher kitchen is a very small but cosy place which is also a reason for Sally to admire the kitchen of the McLoughlins. Again, O'Hara clings to describing the place, which will still be perceived by the child reader as a less cosy place than the Gallagher kitchen.

> It was a much bigger room than the kitchen in her own house. The walls were half timbered in wood, painted green, with the top part of the wall white. There was more furniture in it, too: a big table, half a dozen chairs and stools, a huge brown dresser, and red chests containing grain, meal for the hens.[172]

Maura McLoughlin, aware of her new status as a rich shopowner's daughter, boasts off with her forthcoming holidays at Bundoran. Her aunt owns a guest house in Bundoran where the family will stay for some days. By introducing Bundoran as a popular seaside place, O'Hara refers to the growing importance of going on holiday for the upper class at the turn of the century. Today Bundoran is known as a premier Irish seaside place but at Sally's time it was still developing.

Due to the constantly growing railway, people could travel more easily than in former times and thus, Bundoran's popularity spread across

[171] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 3.
[172] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 15.

class barriers. By the end of the 19th century, Bundoran had become the main seaside resort and hotels and houses started to propagate[173].

In *Blaeberry Sunday*, Elizabeth O'Hara often refers to houses as places that evidence the financial status of the people living there. Sally's house is a simple one compared to Maura's and Manus's house, the Carr's house (doctor of the country) is described as

> a big white house with a long avenue leading up to it from high iron gates, perched down on the edge of the lough, so that it would have a fine view of the sea,[174]

illustrating the status of the Carr family. Furthermore, Miss Lynch's place is depicted as a very lovely place, which makes one feel instantly at home. Wallflowers and other decorations give the house a special character. Although the house might seem a simple place, it is Miss Lynch who gives way to modernity by a bathroom with a lavatory in the house.

The beach to Sally is another place she feels comfortable at because she usually meets there with Manus.

> The tide is going out, exposing sweeps of reddish gold sand. It is the same colour as Manus' hair, in fact. [….] They are both silent now, as they walk hand in hand towards the high cliff, overgrown with greenery, at the far side of the beach. Sally wonders if he plans to climb up that cliff: a narrow path, called "The Seven Bends", wind through the undergrowth until it emerges at the top where a coastguard station, an enormous grey building, stands.[175]

As the beach and the sea often signify freedom to people, a possible interpretation of Sally's walks with Manus down to the beach could be that both of them feel free of their social restraints, no class borders constrain their being together and it seems as if the whole wide world would lie in front of them. It might be that O'Hara intentionally chooses the place as a sign of freedom, but also to picture the place as a possibility for intruders who come to Ireland and destroy the rural peace of the land.

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[173] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bundoran, 29.9.2008.
[174] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 19
[175] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 67.

Concerning the title of the novel, *Blaeberry Sunday*, O'Hara not only chooses to present a special Irish tradition to the reader but to highlight again the importance of place. She strictly depicts the Knockageary mountain in all its details and points out that it is a place where boys and girls make first acquaintances with each other when picking the blueberries. In this novel O'Hara broadens the horizons of the young readers by introducing them to other cultures and countries as well. Sally learns about Iceland and Greenland from Olaf and it is her experience and knowledge about new things that are intentionally passed on to O'Hara's readers.

> Olaf told her about the Eskimos who live in Greenland and live all their lives in the snow, hunting seals and walruses and bears and living only on fish and meat. He told her about Iceland, its glaciers and volcanoes, and springs of water which were boiling hot, bubbling like hot baths in the ground.[176]

She creates an open-minded and young heroine curious about life that the reader voluntarily likes to identify with.

7.3. Historical Time

This time, Elizabeth O'Hara neglects any information on Parnell or Home Rule. More important is the appearance of the visitor from Dublin, Ms. Bannister, who brings news about the Gaelic League and its prospects. Concerning the year 1893, the reader is introduced to the warmest summer in the north west of Ireland. People have problems with the draught as the harvest suffers from the heat.

Poverty is once more an important theme which O'Hara evidences by eviction matters. The landlords in Ireland could evict people who could not pay their rent and Bridgie Greene, in *Blaeberry Sunday*, is one of these poor evicted people. O'Hara recounts the tragedy a family encounters when being evicted of their house and in the case of Bridgie Greene it even is the case of a widow and mother. The delusion of the people is mirrored in the

[176] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 124.

sentence “I thought things were supposed to be getting better now, with the Land League and everything.”[177] Obviously O’Hara wants to make a statement that things did not turn out to be better and poor people still had to suffer and endure hardships in order to survive. The child reader is transferred to a time in which he probably would not want to have lived and thus, is getting an imagination of what Irish history had all been about.

At first, Sally figures that the eviction must be something very emotional until she realizes that it “turned out to be an efficient, highly organised affair, like an auction or a circus or some sort of public entertainment.”[178] It clearly came to be a public entertainment, regarding the photographer from Dublin who continually takes pictures of the event in order to sell them to some newspaper in Dublin. Delusion once more is mirrored when Mrs. Gallagher advises Bridgie Greene to seek money from the Evicted Tenants’ Fund: “Bridgie was sobbing. She did not have much faith in official organisations.”[179] With Bridgie Greene the situation of child labour at the time of 1893 becomes a part of Irish history again. Her older children, of whom the youngest was only nine, had to go to Scotland to help harvesting and picking potatoes there in order to earn some money and support the family’s survival.

Regarding the Gaelic League, mentioned already at the beginning, it is largely Ms. Bannister who recites a hymn of praises for the institution. The Gaelic League had been founded to avoid the decline of the Irish language as the number of native Irish speakers had fallen from 320.000 in 1851 to 38.000 in 1891. Eoin MacNeill called a meeting in Dublin and inaugurated the Gaelic League with Douglas Hyde as its first president. Language classes were established and reached 550 branches by the time of 1908[180]. When Ms. Bannister returns to Dublin she newly points out the activities of the Gaelic League.

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[177] O’Hara, E.: 1994, 82.
[178] O’Hara, E.: 1994, 83.
[179] O’Hara, E.: 1994, 90.
[180] Ruckenstein, L./O’Malley, J.: 2004, 145.

> Well, once I go back to Dublin I'll start to take classes. The Gaelic League is organising a whole series of them for the winter, I will be very very busy[181].

Ms. Bannister intensifies the differences between the Irish country and city when she proposes Sally to find a job in Dublin. She states that everyone there at the moment is trying to learn Irish and is looking for an Irish-speaking girl to be taught by. Here, it becomes obvious that the people of the city experience Ireland in a very different way than in the country. Although Ms. Bannister is Irish herself, she has lost the connection to her roots and adapted to the English influence in the country. Now it seems as if the Irish people living in the city consider learning their own language more as a hobby than as a serious event. In some ways, it seems as if O'Hara would like to convey to the child reader the ignorance of the people towards their national and cultural heritage, thereby making a point in how important it is to preserve traditions and culture.

[181] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 113-114.

7.4. Social Backgrounds

The reader becomes very much involved with Irish society at that time, particularly with Irish society of the countryside. Poverty in the times after the Famine still caused a lot of problems as can be seen in the example of Bridgie Greene. The perception of the country by foreigners is completely different than the perception of the country people themselves.

> "You don't know how lucky you are", said the Visitor, "to live here in this heavenly place, among lovely people. Speaking your own language and eating this fresh, good food."[182]

Once again, O'Hara exposes the naivety and ignorance of Ms. Bannister of the Irish country society. The visitor completely ignores poverty and the hardships inhabitants of Glenbra have to endure. For the city people rural life is constituted by harmony and happiness without any harms. Just as Charles Dickens in his novel of *David Copperfield* presents the hard life of an orphan during times of industrialisation and social poverty, O'Hara conveys to the child reader the real situation of the Irish people. By presenting a realistic tale and describing it closely to the child reader, the latter can imagine what was really going on at that time. This is a rather typical technique in children's literature to emphasize the fate of one character in order to make the reader immerse in the story and foster his understanding. The author, thus, emotionalizes the historical situation.

As mentioned several times before, Irish society has traditionally been very religious. Being religious implies not to commit any sins deliberately. As love and sexuality were a particularly delicate subject in an exceptionally conservative religious society, they often were a taboo[183]. Of course, in a children's novel, sexuality will not and should not be a main interest and it is not the case with O'Hara's novel either. Still, O'Hara wants to relate to the topic which she does by having her heroine experience first love. The restrictions made by the church and society, moral behaviour

[182] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 112.
[183] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 75.

meaning not to have any "sexual" contact before marriage, are mirrored in one single sentence Manus says when Sally talks about eloping. "Sensible girls don't elope. It's a sin. What we're doing now is a sin, even."[184] Manus refers to their secret meetings, their holding hands and their kisses – actually, harmless things. O'Hara points out to the child reader how affected people were in their minds by these restrictions. Common thoughts in a period of time belong to a peoples' social and cultural history, which is the case in the novels. The child reader learns about the past, about the social life and what it expected from people. By recounting social restrictions, O'Hara forms the child readers' national consciousness, makes him aware of what once belonged to his culture and what might once constitute his own development.

Another recurring place of social importance is the fair where Sally gets to know Olaf. Originally, a fair was a public assembly in early Ireland. Fairs in earlier times had a political and economical function. After the time of cultural Anglicisation fairs scarcely resembled the medieval traditions of a public assembly. Rather than being regular, fairs tended to be seasonal by then and function more as a market. An important fair which is mentioned in Elizabeth O'Hara's *Blaeberry Sunday* is the Oul' Lammas Fair in Ballycastle that takes place every year at the end of August. Lammas Fair is very famous because of a song named after the Fair which includes the line: "Did you treat your Mary Ann to the Dulse and Yellow man/At the old Lammas Fair in Ballycastle O!".[185] It is exactly this statement that occurs also in a conversation between Sally and Olaf:

> "[…..] Were you at the ould Lammas Fair then?"
> "I was not. It is on tomorrow I believe. But I was in ould Ballycastle Oh three days ago and the yellow man was already available."

Lammas Fair is a fun fair compared to the Hiring Fair in East Donegal where Sally and Katie in the first novel were hired out to two rich

[184] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 104.
[185] Ruckenstein, L.: 2004, 128.

farmers. Thus, fairs have various social functions and are part of the Irish cultural background in Elizabeth O'Hara's novels.

7.5. Aspects of Irishness and Myth in *Blaeberry Sunday*

Typical features, which recur all the time and could be seen as markers of Irishness, are the mentioning of the home and kitchen as an important place and the loyalty amongst the people in the country.

Right in the beginning of the story, the "little people" are mentioned. The term "little people" refers to the Irish fairies and leprechauns featuring in Irish myths and legends and needs to be mentioned to state their importance[186]. Mrs. Gallagher refers to her youngest daughter Janey as handsome but quickly realises that she should not have said it out loud.

> "Oh now, handsome is as handsome does", said Mrs. Gallagher, tightening her mouth. It worried her when people praised their children's looks: it was thought that such praise was unlucky. If the fairies heard it they would be tempted to steal the child who was thought to be beautiful. "Are you a good girl?" Katie was asking Janey. It was all right to be good. The fairies were not interested in good children![187]

Thus, the child reader learns about Irish mythology and at the same time is made aware of how to avoid having taken a child away by a fairy. As one argument suspends the other, the fairies would not take Janey away.

The Irish fairies have nothing in common with the children´s books´ illustrations or twinkling ballerinas of Disney´s Fantasyland. Instead, Irish fairies are part of rural society and tradition that tells stories abut them, in both its seen and unseen aspects. They share space and time with the human population and their physical and social characteristics resemble those of humans. Whatever runs in their veins is not blood and therefore, according to Christianity, they have no hope of salvation. They abduct

[186] Sammon, P.: 2002, 141.
[187] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 6-7.

children, young women or cows, furthermore, they demand milk, other goods and ask for help in various enterprises, from delivering babies to shoeing horses and fighting battles. When a fairy is displeased they cause illness or death[188].

A further reference to fairies is made when the family gathers plants for the dying of wool. Superstition and myth obviously are a part of everyday life and cannot be forgotten, not even when working hard:

> They also gathered ragweed, which would give a yellow dye, and dock leaves, which would give green. They did not get too much of those, because they did not like yellow and green cloth much: people thought it was unlucky, because the fairies wear yellow and green[189].

Stories about myths and legends are particularly nice to read for children. But as mentioned above, Irish fairies are not seen as nice or benevolent creatures. By introducing fairies in her children's novels, O'Hara touches the reader's awareness for mythology and tradition and at the same time leads him to absorb superstition and Irish fairies as a part of his identity which constitutes typical Irishness.

When Sally accompanies Katie to the hiring fair in Rathmullan she sees a fortune teller, Madame Rosa. The description of the place is very magical, perfectly adjusted by O'Hara for a child reader's imagination. As the Irish tend to be superstitious and believe in higher powers, it is only understandable that Sally chooses to let Madame Rose read her fortune.

Also dreams are important in myths and legends. Dreams often were a sign of the future and had to be interpreted so that the person could live his/her life according to what the dreams foreshadowed. In children's literature dreams are often an important part of narratives as dreams are fundamental to a child's imagination. By dreaming, a person can process the daily events and also construct an imagination. Sally, who is described as a daydreamer and someone who likes to immerse in the books she

[188] Bourke, A.: 2003, 28-29.
[189] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 38.

reads, dreams a lot of her relationship with Manus in *Blaeberry Sunday*. O'Hara foreshadows with Sally's dream the upcoming events:

> When she finally fell asleep she dreamed of him. He was travelling with her in a train, through a landscape that she had never seen before. [.....]She felt perfectly calm and perfectly happy. Then the train stopped at a station, the station in the little town. [….]. Sally sat pressed against her seat and waited for Manus to return. But she knew he was not coming back. She could see him, in her mind, stepping off the train, not at the station but while the train was in motion. […….] and she knew he would not be back[190].

Having read this scene, the reader knows that something is going to happen between Manus and Sally. O'Hara uses this technique to heighten suspense as the child reader may guess Sally's impending separation from Manus. But still, as long as it is a dream, the reader does not know exactly what is going to happen. Moreover, O'Hara uses another important feature of Irishness when she introduces dreams and their power to foreshadow things. Again the child reader learns about Irish cultural identity.

Proverbs belong to a people's culture and they constantly make use of them, usually in their homely language. Elizabeth O'Hara considers proverbs as a marker for Irishness, at least for the people in Glenbra, who "were seldom short of a proverb to suit any occasion."[191] Introducing proverbs, the author switches into her native language Irish: "Is aisteach an mac é an tsaol!"[192] Irish language is probably the strongest marker of Irishness, which the child reader should get aware of. But for those, who do not master the Irish language, the author gives a translation: "The wheel of fortune turns, sometimes up and sometimes down"[193]. Children's novels generally aim at teaching their readers something about life or try to educate them in certain ways. By using proverbs, the author supplies the reader with something that plays an important part in Irish society.

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[190] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 58-57.
[191] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 63.
[192] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 62.
[193] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 63.

As Elizabeth O'Hara is a studied folklorist, she introduces in *Blaeberry Sunday* several aspects of myth and legend but also the Irish tradition of music. Folk culture comprises aspects of popular culture which have long been established in agrarian society and are connected with certain ways of life in a society. In Irish folklore many things developed out of the peasant society[194]. Music plays an important role in national Irish folklore. The traditional Irish music, "folk" music was performed locally to entertain people during the accomplishment of their rituals. Traditional music combines instruments like the harp, the fiddle, flute, accordion, tin whistle or melodeon. Every region possesses its own style of music: while in Sligo music is highly ornamented and of fast tempo, in Donegal the music is based on the use of the fiddle, emphatic bow use and subtle decoration. Influences of Scottish musical tradition can be observed in the Donegal style. Also songs are an important part of the tradition of folk music in Ireland. Songs are seen as vehicles for Irish language and dance[195]. Sally, taking part in the tradition of *Blaeberry Sunday*, the tradition of boys and girls picking blueberries together, observes the scene of boys and girls dancing and making music. Jigs and reels are lively folk dances with jumping movements.[196]

> Three of the boys who were musicians sat under the dolmen and began to play their instruments: melodeon, fiddle and tin whistle. They played jigs and reels, and the girls and boys danced together, enjoying the fresh air up here on the top of the world, enjoying the difficulty of dancing on the uneven ground, enjoying their freedom to be together[197].

Elizabeth O'Hara conveys perfectly well the comfortable situation of a nice musical break after the hard work of picking blueberries. The child reader identifies with the scene and it seems as if he was a part of this special moment. In children's literature it is important to involve the reader into the action and make him feel as if the situation was lived by himself.

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[194] Ó Giolláin, D.: 2005, 225.
[195] Ruckenstein, L:. 2004, 245-247.
[196] Sammon, P.: 2002, 118.
[197] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 119.

O'Hara does not only include Irish music to make the reader aware of Irish cultural identity but also combines the scene with a nice tale about two lovers. The dolmen Elizabeth O'Hara refers to is associated to the legend of Diarmuid and Gráinne and referred to as their bed: "People called it ´Leaba Diarmada agus Ghráinne`, the bed of Diarmaid and Gráinne".[198] In Irish, underlining the importance of places would be connected to "dinnseanchas" which is a branch of mythology dealing with place-lore[199]. Paddy Sammon refers to Proinsias Mac Cana's work Celtic Mythology from 1968 in order to explain best what "dinnseanchas" means:

> Every river and lake and well, every plain and fill and mountain has its own name and each name evokes its own explanatory legend. These legends constituted a distinct branch of native tradition known as dinnseanchas, "the lores of places"….The dinnseanchas is thus a kind of comprehensive topography, a legendary guide to the Irish landscape[200].

Introducing the dolmen, Elizabeth O'Hara makes use of this "legendary guide to the Irish landscape" and drags the reader easily into another world, a world full of magic and adventures – which again is a typical feature of children's novels. She integrates Irish cultural background perfectly into her fictional writing for children.

The dolmen itself is a megalithic tomb with a large, flat stone laid on upright ones and dates back to 2500-2000 BC. There are said to be 366 dolmens in Ireland and they are linked to the story of Diarmuid and Gráinne[201]. Elizabeth O'Hara introduces an important legend to the child reader in order to foster his sense for cultural identity. By using legend and myth she makes it easier for the child to adapt to his/her cultural identity.
Diarmuid was one of the Fianna and famous for his love spot. Gráinne, Fionn Mac Cumhail's betrothed put a ban on him to elope with her. Because of the ban he had no other choice than to follow her. Fionn chased both around Ireland for a year and a day because of his wrath. Because

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[198] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 119.
[199] Sammon, P.. 2002, 67.
[200] Mac Cana, P. cited in Sammon, P.: 2002, 67.
[201] Sammon, P.: 2002, 67.

Diarmuid's foster-father advised the couple not to sleep in the same place for more than two nights so many of the dolmen monuments can be found all over Ireland. But finally Fionn caught up with Diarmuid and managed to kill him[202]. We shall look at Elizabeth O'Hara's way of retelling the story:

> The story was that it was one of the beds Diarmaid and Gráinne, two lovers eloping, had slept on during their flight from Fionn, the leader of the Fianna, a band of hunters. He was an old man but he wanted to marry Gráinne himself. He chased them across Ireland, and they stopped to rest at many places, always sleeping in the open air, apparently, if the stories were to be believed, on slabs of rock which looked decidedly uncomfortable. In the end Fionn had got them. Diarmaid was killed by a boar, the only animal that had the power to kill him.[203]

Elizabeth O'Hara takes the legend and slightly abridges it by adding that Diarmuid could only be killed by a boar. For children such a legend is fascinating as it covers a lot of adventures the heroes are drawn into and they can relive the tale with the protagonists of the story. Moreover, they get to learn what all the various dolmen all over Ireland mean.

In *Blaeberry Sunday* Elizabeth O'Hara also adds other cultures to the Irish one. By becoming Sally's friend, Olaf introduces to her another world she has never been to and entails special rites and sagas itself. Moreover, O'Hara uses the possibility to describe the Irish people from the outside, or at least, how she thinks they might be seen by foreigners, when Olaf talks about Manus' character traits.

> He is a merchant. It is his profession to be nice. All Irish people seem to have that profession anyway. You are far too busy being nice to each other and underneath maybe you are not so nice after all[204].

A typical feature of Irishness for non-Irish people obviously seems to be their superficial behaviour – they are nice to everyone but in realty they bear their problems for themselves and are thoughtful and melancholic people underneath. Concerning legends and sagas, Olaf remarks that in an Icelandic saga, Sally would have sent her brother to kill Manus because he

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[202] Sammon, P.: 2002, 66.
[203] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 119.
[204] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 140.

had left her. Here, O'Hara gives references to another culture's legend, and interestingly enough she chose an Icelandic boy to become a close acquaintance of Sally's. Iceland and Ireland are both islands, maybe sharing some of the same experiences but still being very different as to their cultural heritage. For the child reader the friendship between Sally and Olaf will be fascinating as both of them learn from each other. In fact, this is what children do when they make friendships: they learn from each other and experience adventures together. Friends can guide each other into new directions and help discovering new worlds. To Sally, Olaf is very important as a friend because he

> was a great healer, too. Having him around helped Sally more than anything else. He was someone she could confide in. He was cheerful and light-hearted. He was wise beyond his years – whatever they were.[205]

Still, Sally has to learn to live without Olaf again when he returns to Iceland but his voice in her mind accompanies her in all her further decisions.

[205] O'Hara, E.: 1994, 145.

8. Penny-Farthing Sally

8.1.Plot

The third and last novel of the trilogy centres around Sally's life as a governess of the Erikson family in Dublin. Because of the visitor her family had in Glenbra, Geraldina Bannister, she is offered a job to teach Irish to the Erikson's daughter Snow. Sally, now 19 years of age, is very much concerned with her life in Dublin and experiences a city at the time of the Gaelic League. Attending the meetings of the Gaelic League, Sally makes new friends with Thomas and Ethel, two young Dubliners, gets to see W.B. Yeat's plays on stage, learns how to ride a bike and gets to see the life of the poor in Dublin. The first part of the novel is set in the city of Dublin, particularly in the area of Rathmines, whereas the second part of the novel is set in Glenbra, when Sally has to learn that her sister Katie has caught tuberculosis during her stay in Glasgow. Katie also got married but her husband had died. Sally herself gets back to Dublin to bring Snow home to her parents. Back in Dublin, Thomas asks her to marry him and also Manus, who is not going out with Eileen Carr anymore, travels to Dublin to ask her hand in marriage. It is not explicitly stated that she and Manus are going to be married but the reader can imagine the happy ending easily, for the last lines of the novel read: "She knew what she would do. She put on her coat and set out for Manus's hotel.[206]"

Although this appears to be an open ending, it suggests a happy ending. After all the tragedies, sufferings and efforts Sally had to go through, she has grown, became an adult young lady and has learnt from her adventures and experiences what she wants for life. The author leaves it to the child reader's imagination how the story between her and Manus will continue and if they will return to live happily ever after in Glenbra. Still, her children's novels deliver an insight into what it means to acquire an identity during adolescence without being too much instructive on the

[206] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 185.

reader. Moreover, she provides the reader with beautiful prose and an intricate background of Ireland's past life and times.

8.2. Geographical Settings

The gap between city and country is evidenced in the last of O'Hara's novels, or at least looked at more closely than in prequels to *Penny-Farthing Sally*.

Sally lives in a big beautiful house together with the Erikson's. Once more places in the house and descriptions of the house itself are of great importance to the author, thus she can also illustrate the differences of a house like the Erikson's and the house of Sally's family back home in Glenbra. Particularly, the room of Mrs. Erikson is of interest to Sally as "the mood of the room was from another world, stranger, older, than even the eccentric world of the Erikson's household[207]".

When Sally arrived in Dublin for the first time she had been electrified by the atmosphere of the station. The author's description of the station draws upon Sally's feeling and her being challenged by a new world. O'Hara again makes use of a typical feature of children's literature by introducing the reader to Sally's new life full of adventures but at the same time pictures the girl's insecurity and her being taken aback by the situation.

> The station was full of energy. A human river flowed through it, a river of bustle and exuberance and work. It was exciting and thrilling, as well as daunting. She felt lost and alone, one the one hand. On the other hand she felt filled with power. Already after a few minutes she felt she liked this place. She felt she could rise to its challenge. She felt, in a way, at home.[208]

A servant of the Erikson's meets her at the station to take her to her new home and the first comment she makes is about Sally's Irish peasant girl's looks. Elizabeth O'Hara introduces typical prejudices of a person living

[207] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 3.
[208] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 6.

in a city towards someone from the country. But the servant is sure that Sally will be smartened up in a short time. Everything is bigger and louder and Sally encounters ugly smells she had never experienced before: “That was on Harcourt Street. Sally pinched her nose and understood that life in a city posed problems that country people never dreamed of”[209].

Sally experiences a whole new life in Dublin as she is invited to accompany Mrs. Erikson to the theatre – the Antient Concert Rooms. There she is allowed to witness W.B. Yeats’s play *The Countess Kathleen*. When it comes to describing the theatre, the author does not describe the place as she usually does it with houses, kitchens or other spaces people spend their time in. When Sally enters the theatre, O’Hara turns to describe the overwhelming scene Sally encounters: a typical Dublin theatre evening night with many people and a bustle Sally had never observed before.

> The foyer of the Antient Concert Rooms presented an equally colourful spectacle. A huge crowd of people had assembled to see the first night of the new play, The Countess Kathleen, which was W.B. Yeats’s first play. The people thronged the foyer, greeting each other and talking. Some were dressed very grandly, in silk and satin evening gowns, while others had come in any old thing, it seemed to Sally.[210]

A child reading *Penny-farthing Sally* is immediately drawn into the situation and will easily understand Sally’s situation: everything is new to her and it is as if she saw the world with the eyes of a curious child. She is absorbed by the atmosphere, which would be another feature of children’s literature: mostly the protagonists discover new worlds and are sucked in by new experiences which help them to find their path in life and to detect their identity. The reader assists to the development of a character, which to him is a heroic one, and will himself be incited to discover his identity by new experiences and adventures.

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[209] O’Hara, E.: 1996, 11.
[210] O’Hara, E.: 1996, 30.

The Gaelic League had already been mentioned by Geraldina Bannister in *Blaeberry Sunday*, but now Sally becomes a member of the league and O'Hara, in her usual manner, describes what the place is like to help the reader visualize the setting and scene.

> The meeting was held in a shabby house up a lane off the main street. They knocked on the flaking door. Nobody answered so Geraldina pushed. The door was open and in the dim light they climbed a bare wooden stairway. In a gloomy room lit by a very smelly gas lamp about twenty people were assembled. [……] The walls were covered in a grimy brown paper, which was peeling off in several places. Large damp spots like maps of the world covered the ceiling. The floor was bare and a bit dirty.[211]

As the Gaelic League was founded as an institution to help people get access to things Irish and teach the Irish language, there obviously was not too much money available to afford a nicer place for the assemblies. It also seems as if O'Hara by her detailed description of the "shabby" place, was trying to give an impression how inferior the Gaelic League compared to other institutions was. It seems as if only a few people were interested in participating in the teachings of Irish culture and therefore, the League could not afford better places.

Other places Sally visits in Dublin are the park, where Ethel, Thomas and she would go riding their bikes at night and the, South Dublin – Sandymount Strand and the poor districts of Dublin where the street arabs – poor children - live with their families.

Visiting a park at night to learn how to ride a bicycle is something very adventurous and therefore made to be part in a children's novel. It is also exciting as Sally loses Ethel and Thomas because the keeper of the park makes his rounds at night. Suddenly she has an encounter with a statue, seeming very much alive to her. Doing something forbidden to figure out one's boundaries, again is typical for a children's novel. O'Hara makes the reader aware of what can happen doing forbidden things and what the

[211] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 36.

consequences might be. For instance, Sally's bike, which actually was the bike of Ethel's mother, gets stolen or taken away. The young girl does not know how she could ever afford a new bike and has to bear the consequences. Fortunately, the bike can be retrieved and so Sally does not have to pay anything. Still, Elizabeth O'Hara here gives an example of hard consequences which in a way is an advice to the child reader to think before doing something forbidden.

8.3. Historical Time

The story is set in the year 1899, going on to a new millennium as is also stated in the novel. "The New Year would literally usher in a new age – the twentieth century."[212] Regarding Irish Culture, it was the time of W.B. Yeats, who, with his play *The Countess Kathleen*, signified the beginning of the Irish Revival in theatre.[213] Sally has the possibility to see the premiere of the play, first performed in 1899. Mrs. Erikson, her employer, was a good friend of "Willie", as she calls him. In the beginning of the novel the reader can even assist to her moaning that "Willie" did not want her to play the leading role, which was taken over by Maude Gonne. By introducing "Willie" Yeats as a friend of the Erikson's, O'Hara emotionalizes the character of a famous Irish person. To the child reader, W.B. Yeats is now not only some popular Irish writer but is personalised by being a friend of the family. Thus, O'Hara artfully introduces Irish history to her children's novels helping the reader to participate in it more easily by emotionalizing the characters.

Concerning the historical time the novel is set in, O'Hara leads the reader to many important events: she introduces the Gaelic League and its significance more closely and mentions the South African war with the Boers to widen the child readers' horizon of history during the 19th century. The author revives the lives of people important for Irish history, like Douglas Hyde, the founder of the Gaelic League. Sally is able to assist to

[212] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 173.
[213] http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O54-CountessCathleenThe.html, 8.10.2008.

one of Hyde's speeches at the Gaelic League and to see one of his plays (*Casadh an tSugain*) written and performed in Irish.

> He was a small man with black hair and a huge walrus moustache. Sally did not think he looked very important, but he was. [……] He spoke to the group for about ten minutes, telling them that they were doing very good work and that he hoped they would continue. [….] He said they were saving the ancient culture of Ireland for the generations of the future and that nothing was more important.[214]

The poverty of children in those times is not neglected by O'Hara. When Sally accompanies Thomas for a ride through Dublin, she sees orphans and all kinds of poor children. The scene shifts from the nice Rathmines to the poor people in Sackville Street. Elizabeth O'Hara goes back in time to make it clear that life in the 19th century was a hardship for many young Irish people and that hardships in many different forms are part of the Irish culture. The child reader can imagine a different life and come to the conclusion that life right now must be better.

When the scene shifts back to Glenbra and Sally visiting her family because of troubles with her sister Katie, the historical time mirrors all the poverty the working class had to endure. Katie had lived in Glasgow for a while and caught tuberculosis there while she was living in the poorest conditions in Glasgow.

> It was a room in a basement, with no furniture except a broken bed and a table. A fire that wasn't lit. It was freezing cold and smelled damp. The walls were all streaked with damp, and mould, and the floorboards were broken in places so there was a draught coming up through them. Later I found out that other things came up too – rats.[215]

Katie describes the conditions she had to live in and the reader is taken aback by what she has had to suffer. Once again, O'Hara underlines the difficulties poor Irish people had to go through in order to survive. The child reader shall empathize with the character, be informed about the past

[214] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 38.
[215] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 117.

and take it in to his cultural identity as it is a sad but important part of Irish history.

As pointed out above, O'Hara does not restrict herself to the Irish world only. She broadens the readers' horizon by mentioning historical but also social facts about South Africa and the Boer war and Scotland, because of Sally's sister having lived there.

The discussion about South Africa and the Boer is related to Sam, the Erikson's boy of 17 years, who wants to fight for the English in the Boer war, as he is of the opinion that the English have always tried to improve conditions for everyone but the Boers have always opposed to them. Sam even considers himself as English: "I am proud to be English.[216]" Mrs. Erikson cannot understand why her son would call himself an English person when he is Irish. Elizabeth O'Hara gets back to the old topic of rivalry between Irish and English people. As the Irish have been dominated by the English for a long time, they rather sympathize with the Boers in South Africa.

> Many Irish people, like many all over the world, were sympathetic to the Boers, who were proving themselves to be brave and heroic in the face of huge forces from the greatest empire in the world.[217]

The child reader sympathizes with the Boers and the conflict between English and Irish is revived by the author. Her children novels convey the conflict between the two nations and she points out the anger of the Irish towards the English.

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[216] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 25.
[217] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 173.

8.4. Social Background

By working as a governess in the big beautiful house of the Erikson's she discovers another social background – those of the rich people. Mrs. Erikson, who considers herself as an Irish patriot, wanted an Irish governess to teach her daughter her "native" language. As stated above, Sally enters a completely different world, "another planet"[218] when she arrives in Dublin. The social life in the city compared to the social life in the country is totally different. Again, the conflict between city and country recurs here. People in the city are prejudiced when it comes to describing people from the country. Although Geraldina Bannister had visited the country and especially Glenbra, she speaks out a prejudice when she characterizes Sally as the typical peasant girl. "You look so perfect for the sort of plays they are putting on now. That sort of Irish peasant look. Doesn't she look like the typical Irish peasant?[219]" Actually, Geraldina wanted to make a compliment to Sally but was not at all aware of her biases against Irish peasants.

Another social aspect of the time the story is set in, are the new technological inventions like the first motor cars whose production started around 1880.[220] Even bicycles are something special to the poorer classes. Ethel informs Sally that everyone nowadays rides a bicycle in Dublin, not being aware of the fact that she herself is the daughter of a gentleman and can afford it. Privileges like bicycles or motor cars were something reserved to the rich people. Mrs. Erikson donates her old penny-farthing to Sally which she can use to accompany Thomas and Ethel on their bike tours through Dublin. The penny-farthing lends the novel its title as everyone who sees Sally passing by with this bicycle has to wonder. A penny-farthing was

[218] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 5.
[219] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 40.
[220] http://library.thinkquest.org/C001547/text/engine.php3?department=land&chapter=Motor%20Cars, 21.10.2008.

a high wheel bicycle and the first true bicycle ever on which actual speed and distance could be achieved.[221]

When Sally is informed about her sister having come home, she instantly thinks of a pregnancy. In the predominantly religious Irish society issues of sex and sexuality clearly were one of the greatest taboos. It was best not to talk about it at all. Premarital sex and a pregnancy resulting out of this have traditionally been unacceptable. Women who suffered this fate were bound to be social outcasts and were deprived any financial help, sometimes even their families entirely rejected them.[222]

Already in *Blaeberry Sunday*, this conservative view on sexuality is mentioned when Sally and Manus sit together at the beach holding hands. In *Penny-farthing Sally* the situation of what might have happened to Katie is analysed by Sally with fear and shame.

> At that time, everyone in Glenbra – everyone in Ireland – believed that being pregnant was the very worst fate that could befall a young girl who was not married. The newspapers were full of stories of girls who killed themselves because they found they were pregnant, or of girls who had been arrested because they had concealed their pregnancies and killed their babies, rather than go through with the shame of admitting that they had one. For a girl like Katie, being pregnant would be a no-win situation. No matter what she did, she would be disgraced and punished by society – even if her own family did not disown her, as many families did.[223]

Elizabeth O'Hara describes such a situation in her third and last novel again, probably because it is of great importance to her. The author seems to speak to the child reader and tell him/her what the situation in the past was like. It is rather unusual for a children's novel to speak openly about the social implications of sexual relationships, but by delineating the circumstances of the past and referring to taboos of Irish society, she subtly makes the reader aware of what can happen if one is not cautious. Moreover, she instructs the reader about taboos of Irish society which might

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[221] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penny-farthing, 8.10.2008.
[222] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 75-76.
[223] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 104.

not be that strict anymore today but she gives insight into the development of the Irish society and culture. And this again is what children's novels should do: give insight into a certain way of life and traditions in a playful way but still making young readers aware of the world out there.

Women did not have many rights at those days and were not allowed to enter public houses in order to socialize with other people. This was almost regarded as immoral as having a baby without being married. This topic comes up when Thomas wants to invite her Sally a drink and she wonders if the place was a pub. Because by entering a public house "her reputation would be lost forever".[224]

Other social factors in Irish society at that time were diseases like tuberculosis. Katie, having caught the disease in Glasgow, does not want to see a doctor first because the people could be talking badly about her. Elizabeth O'Hara states this very openly in the novel.

> The fact was that people often tried to disguise the truth where this illness was concerned. They were ashamed to have it in their families, as if it reflected badly on them. People believed you contracted it because you didn't have enough to eat, or because you lived in bad, damp conditions. And everyone was ashamed to have to acknowledge that this might be true, even at a time when a great many people did live in terrible conditions.[225]

The author does not explicitly mention the Famine as a cause for many of the social problems in Ireland, but the reader can deduce from her writing that the Great Famine had affected many areas, most of all the working conditions for the poor to whom Katie belongs. During the Famine over one million people died and two more million emigrated within a decade: by 1900 the population of Ireland had been halved. The Famine marked a watershed in many fields of Irish life: society, culture, demographics, economics.[226] Concerning economics, O'Hara creates the character of Katie who has to suffer all the economic conditions of the poor

[224] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 167.
[225] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 125.
[226] Whelan, K.: 2005, 137.

and therefore, renders a socially and historically important time more emotional to the child reader. It is probably not the author's aim that the child reader should identify with Katie as this might be a little difficult given her circumstances, but she obviously wants to emphasize the tragic conditions a person can find oneself in because of the social and historical events. Some genres of children's novels try to inform their readers about the past and *Penny-farthing Sally* is part of this tradition, providing historical facts and events of the 19th century.

8.5. Aspects of Irishness and Myth in *Penny-farthing Sally*

In the prequels to *Penny-farthing Sally* the author focuses much more on Irish myth and legends than in the final novel of the trilogy. In her last novel, she presents a more mature and grown Sally, who dreams a lot. Dreaming is more often present myths or legends. Particularly at the beginning of the novel when Sally is rummaging through Mrs. Erikson's dresses, she is presented as a daydreamer, taking on different identities every time she changes a dress:

> She became a Japanese geisha girl, and a gentle Indian maiden going to her marriage ceremony. She was a flirt at the court of Louis the Fourteenth and a duchess in a feudal castle, waiting for her lord to return from the crusades.[227]

Dreaming is part of any cultural tradition and this is particularly true of Ireland with its long mythological traditions of Gaelic (or Irish) culture. O'Hara combines Sally's day dreaming with a typical feature of a children's novel: trying out something new is very important to children and they like to take on different identities during their younger ages, thus they can experiment and discover who they want to be. It is part of the development of human nature and playfully, children discover their identities.

[227] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 12.

Dreams are important, although Sally does not really believe the prophetic significance of dreams. When she has a nightmare about Manus, she wonders if any of this has a special meaning as regards her complicated relationship to the young boy. Even so, this nightmare is a kind of foreshadowing of her meeting with Manus in Glenbra, although she does not consider this at all. The reader will recognize by the dream that something is going to happen between her and Manus.

The belief in the supernatural is depicted when Sally is out in the park at nights with Ethel and Thomas for a ride with their bicycles. She sees a statue which she feels is turning to life when staring at her.

> There was something captivating about her….she seemed to be about to move. She seemed to be about to come alive. […..] Slowly, a smile spread across its stony face.[228]

The statue seems to have a soul and appears to be coming to life, or Sally thinks that this is the case because she had been more deeply steeped in the ancient Gaelic culture in the country than Ethel and Thomas. But when she gets to know Ethel's mother, the woman believes in what Sally says. Ethel's mother is a member in a society of spiritualists called the Rosicrucians. They think they can get in touch with ghosts and spirits. Ethel's mother recounts the story of a woman murdered in the park many years ago on Christmas Eve. Sally is now convinced that this was the murdered girl's spirit haunting the park. The Celts as an ancient culture believed in spiritual nature of man, the immortality of the soul and the supernatural – it is only understandable why O'Hara makes use of spiritual aspects in her novel and why she wants to underline the powerful Irish heritage. Spirituality is a vital part of being Irish and thus, is an integral aspect of Irishness. Myth relates to the ancient folk of the island which has given many traditions to the country. Myth is a significant part of Irishness, alongside many other factors.

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[228] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 56.

The people of Dublin, however, are not so deeply rooted in legends or myths or familiar with Irish beliefs – it seems as O'Hara wishes to emphasize the differences between country and city in this novel. In the city, people no longer believe in ancient Irish traditions and legends, they are less spiritual and tend to leave their Celtic background behind. In the novels it is emphasized that the Gaelic League tried to save the Irish heritage in the city. Another interesting point is that as soon as Sally returns to visit her hometown Glenbra, legends are mentioned again. It is to Snow that Sally recounts the legend of the fairy horse in the lake near Harebell Brae. Snow, having grown up in the city of Dublin, does not have much knowledge about Irish myths and legends and with Sally she learns about her cultural heritage. The fairy horse was separated from its mother because a farmer tried to catch both of them, but he only succeeded in keeping the foal. The foal became one of the most beautiful horses in the area of Donegal. One day he takes the horse up to the mountain where Sally and Snow are trying to climb, and the sounds of another horse whinnying could be heard. Suddenly, the farmer's horse runs away to the lake to join its mother there and

> the last thing he saw of the black horse, was it leaping into the lake, to join its mother, the white horse, there in the middle of the lake waiting for him. Then the two of them sank into the lake and they've never been seen again since in these parts.[229]

The legend says that if one jumps into the lake, he/she will come out in the southern part of the globe. Snow is fascinated by the legend as she had never heard it before. Probably most children will be inspired by this legend and dream of travelling the world through this lake. O'Hara combines myth and legend in order to amuse the child reader and to help imagine a mythical world.

[229] O'Hara, E.: 1996, 133.

9. Irish Identities and Historiography in the Trilogy

Throughout the trilogy Elizabeth O'Hara involves the reader in a world full of Irishness, myth, legend, dreams and the life of a young girl in quest for her identity. The first two novels, *The Hiring Fair* and *Blaeberry Sunday*, focus more on typical Irish legends than the last novel of the trilogy, which is more concerned with the protagonist's quest for her own identity during her adolescence.

As pointed out before, it seems that O'Hara tries to underline the difference between Sally's life as an Irish peasant girl which was rich in traditions and old Irish beliefs, whereas her life as a governess in Dublin estranges her a little from this "folkloric" world.

Concerning Irish Identities, we get an insight into two different worlds: the Irish people in the country and the Irish people in the city. The contrast between those two environments plays an important role in Sally's life as she has to experience both worlds to finally find out where she belongs to. Her return to a peasant world, which is more or less indicated when she chooses to visit Manus in the hotel, revives her identity as a girl from the country which is more sensible towards any mythical themes or legends. If she had chosen to be with Thomas in the city, she probably would have become like Ethel or Geraldina Bannister with time passing by. Both of the characters mentioned are very interested in the Irish past and culture and are members in the Gaelic League, still it seems they do not really know what it means to be Irish. Whatever they do is more or less superficial or is just done because it is "en vogue" at the moment. Only Sally, the peasant girl, carries a lot of "Irishness" within her character.

As has been stated several times in this thesis, Elizabeth O'Hara herself has studied Folklore and is therefore an expert in this theme. Moreover, she has a keen interest in conveying details of Irish history in her novels to make them more alive and touch the reader's consciousness.

By embedding Sally in a background that treats the economic, social and historical development of Ireland at the turn of the century, she goes back in time to focus on one story to help the reader to associate much more with the many diverse historical aspects of Ireland because he sees them more emotionally through Sally's eyes.

She excels at making history a constant presence the readers' lives to emphasize that history is never static but always a dynamic process. History is constantly transforming, portraying different meanings and generally appearing in different shapes.[230] True historians have the problem that establishing the past cannot merely be a collection of historical facts as the gap between the past and the historian's present prevents him from seeing the whole picture unconditioned by his personal life.[231]

By introducing W.B. Yeats as a character in *Penny-Farthing Sally*, Elizabeth O'Hara indirectly states how important the mythological heritage is for Irish writers of the past and the present. It was Yeats who drew on Celtic mythology to demonstrate Ireland's uniqueness in these concerns and to emphasize the special gift the Irish inherited from the Celts: the gift of spirituality and seeing the world through different eyes.[232] Yeats's concern was to cultivate all things Gaelic and he tried to blend the supernatural and the esoteric that he associated with the West of Irish peasantry with the elegant refinement of Anglo-Irish ascendancy.[233] Elizabeth O'Hara seems to write in his tradition for what concerns the reviving of all things Gaelic. This ancient world seems to be the basis of Irishness one has to acknowledge and to understand in order to get an impression of what being Irish means. To communicate this world to children she rather uses a different language as in her novels for grown-ups – much simpler and with fewer references to specific Irish issues. Still, her heroine becomes step by step an adult being aware of her cultural roots as

[230] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 15.
[231] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 16.
[232] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 19.
[233] Cleary, J.: 2005, 12.

can be seen in the last novel of the trilogy. Sally is aware of her Irish heritage and even starts transferring her knowledge to the girl she is taking care of. This might also be a reference to the oral tradition of telling stories and legends popular in Ireland to this very day.

As we can see in the novels, it is a special world Elizabeth O'Hara presents to the child reader. The reader is allowed to return to the past and to participate in the world of the Irish people at the end of the 19th century. Besides the quest for identity of the heroine, cultural identity plays the most important part – and then again, cultural identity is incorporated in a coming of age story and thus, Elizabeth O'Hara creates a cycle of life that confronts the heroine with the past and the cultural identity of her country. In literature she can best express cultural manifestations and involve the reader in a typical Irish background.

> The ideological category of Irishness signifies on the one hand roots, belonging, tradition, Gemeinschaft, and on the other hand, again with marvellous convenience, exile, diffusion, globality, diaspora...With wonderful economy, it signifies a communitarianism nostalgically seductive in a disorientatingly cosmopolitan world, while offering itself at the same time as a very icon of that world in its resonance of political defeat, hybridity, marginality, fragmentation.[234]

With regard to this statement, we may discover various Irish identities in the three novels. The categories of Irishness listed by Howe recur in O'Hara's novels and establish several Irish identities.

The main Irish identity is the one of peasants in the 19th century because Sally as the protagonist belongs to this social class. O'Hara succeeds in presenting an old world with difficult circumstances but a strong sense for family, nature, comradeship and other things Irish. Another identity is the one of the shopkeeper, Manus's father, who can afford a better education for his children, better clothes and holidays. The character of Sally's friend Maura is negatively affected by the change of status of her

[234] Howe, S.: 2000, 2.

father and starts acting in an arrogant way, assuming that she was superior to Sally. Furthermore, there is Sally's grandmother which incorporates the typical Irish feature of a strict Catholic. The old woman is typically depicted with a rosary in her hand or by making comments about God. Geraldina Bannister, the Gallaghers' visitor, is a person who wants to inhale Irish identity at once, without learning a lot and thinks it is a given that all people living in Ireland have a comprehensive knowledge about the Irish past. She tries desperately hard to get an insight into everything Irish but this is exactly what withholds her from really understanding the Irish past and the traditions.

The Erikson family is somehow similar to Geraldina Bannister: they represent the rich class, members of a high social status, and with famous friends like W.B. Yeats but in fact, Mrs. Erikson pretends more to be Irish than she really is by acting in a very superficial way most of the time. Although she considers herself to be an Irish patriot, she does not seem to care truly about Irishness.

In the end, the child reader encounters several Irish identities and is made aware of how things developed in this country. All the identities Elizabeth O'Hara presents are Irish in their hearts and carry with them traits of the ancient Gaelic world, although at times this may not be very obvious to all the characters. Still, being Irish, belonging to a world full of traditions is what shapes the characters into what they are. O'Hara's heroine is the best example of a protagonist who strongly connects with her roots and carries the past within her.

By making use of historiography and emotionalizing past events of Irish history, O'Hara succeeds in creating a diverse spectrum of Irishness.

9.1. Elizabeth O'Hara: "A Historian of Emotion"

History has always played an important role in Irish society and particularly, in Irish literary production. Influences of the Irish past can be seen in most of the novels produced by Irish writers. Writers like Elizabeth O'Hara, or James Joyce and W.B. Yeats before her, are involved in the preoccupation with things past[235].

> Ireland's present is bound up in its past in a way that cannot be compared to most other countries and its people have a feeling for history that informs and shapes their consciousness[236].

This "feeling for history", Patricia Levy talks about, can be discerned in Elizabeth O'Hara's writing. She is concerned with the past of her country, the island's past is "bound up" in Elizabeth O'Hara's present, and so she decides to let the country speak through her novels. A protagonist like Sally Gallagher is one of the many Irish identities co-existing on the island, whose consciousness is shaped by the events of history and most of all, whose identity is shaped by exactly this consciousness.

In this thesis we are concerned with a writer who puts her main focus on folklore. Elizabeth O'Hara's two main concerns, which can be detected in all her works: the occupation with Irish history and Irish culture. She frequently incorporates issues of myth and folklore into her texts and lets fact and fiction interact with each other.[237]

In an interview, which can be found on the internet, O'Hara explains her relationship with Ireland and why she is so fascinated by the stories it comprises.

> I am also motivated by my love-hate relationship with Ireland, which I find a rather extraordinary country, full of contradictions and

[235] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 18.
[236] Levy, P.: 2000, 23.
[237] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 10-13.

> anomalies. It seems to be a country which demands to be written about[238].

It is out of her love-hate relationship with Ireland that she deduces her stories from. Obviously, it is possible that out of such a relationship great works like O'Hara's can arise. Given that O'Hara in her children's novels makes use of emotionalizing the Irish past by involving her character Sally in many problems of the past, she creates a possibility to identify with the protagonist, to feel what the Irish past actually was about. Child readers in particular will be fascinated by Sally's story and without effort will acquire knowledge about their own country's past, which they will probably remember for a much longer time than facts instructed to them at school. As a lot of her writing is involved with history but is being very much personalized and emotionalized by her characters, she describes herself as an "historian of emotion".

> I feel like an historian of the emotional and psychological life of my time. I want to write it down, so that people will know how it was[239].

In this interview, she furthermore talks about how she finds the stories for her novels, which happens through listening to what other people have to say. She clearly states that the stories come to her because of ordinary people telling her about their lives. Only that she does not consider ordinary people as boring or ordinary, but they live up to be her fountain of inspiration and help her to understand how the world works[240].

It is just an assumption that, concerning the trilogy about Sally, she might have heard a story from someone who recollected the past of his family in which a similar story like Sally's had taken place.

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[238] http://www.prairieden.com/front_porch/visiting_authors/dhuibhne.html, 10.10.2008.
[239] http://www.prairieden.com/front_porch/visiting_authors/dhuibhne.html, 10.10.2008.
[240] http://www.prairieden.com/front_porch/visiting_authors/dhuibhne.html, 10.10.2008.

To emotionally grasp the world of Sally Gallagher and Irish history at the turn to the 20th century, Elizabeth O'Hara investigates past things in a very realistic way and moreover, establishes timeframes and conflicting social systems at the heart of the protagonist's dilemma. The outcome provides an insight into history and into particular aspects of Irishness[241]. The author seems to choose aspects which relate to her perception of the Irish world and past and, therefore, cannot be seen as a complete work of historical facts as she will judge the past subjectively.

In an interview with Éilís Ní Dhuibhne which was recorded by a student of the English Studies Department in Vienna, Carina Scheuringer, the writer once more emphasizes her role as an historian of emotion concerning the Irish past:

> I was always very taken with [….] this kind of cliché that poetry or literature is the history of emotion [;] […] I would see writers as the historians of emotion, and I would see myself as the historian of emotion in Ireland, specifically[242].

As a historian of emotion she has the chance to freely interpret a society at the time of Sally Gallagher and help the child reader to grasp the emotions associated with the Irish past. By choosing one fate, she succeeds in the revival of one particular character of the past, which might be fictional, but may as well have been a true story of how the world in Ireland worked back in the 19th century.

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[241] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 20.
[242] Scheuringer, C.: 2005, 2.

10. Conclusion

During their childhood children acquire a concept of their „home“: they discover the location, their country, town or village, which they name „home“. Acquiring a national identity is always associated with language and as children learn to speak, they also get to learn about their culture[243]. The aim of this M.A. thesis is to point out how Irish children's literature and the establishment of a national conscience are interwoven. We shall not claim that this applies to all Irish writers as we have only analysed three novels by one author. But the author is an outstanding Irish novelist and short story writer who is particularly concerned with Ireland and its past. Because of her folklore studies many features of Irishness influence her stories and give insight into a spiritual Irish world and the highly interesting Irish history.

Ireland has always been concerned with its strong feelings for the past, which pervade many areas of life. The question of identity is apparent in fiction for children and Ireland's history has been depicted in writings for young readers, like in Elizabeth O'Hara[244].

In general, a writer's aim is to entertain his readers, give advice or consolation, pass on traditions, morals or other culturally important information, usually wrapped all up in a package of an exciting story which draws the reader into it by its suspense. Also the child reader in Elizabeth O'Hara's novels is attracted by Sally's story and besides being entertained, is informed about Irish past and features of Irishness. As mentioned above, whilst entertaining, writers try to convey a message, to influence the reader and particularly with children, who have usually not formed an overall opinion themselves, influence can be easier. The transport of historical information by a thrilling story will be received more easily than the history

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243 http://books.google.at/books?hl=de&lr=&id=Pv1mmwjnWXMC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Irish+children%27s+literature+and+national+identity&ots=UvTmrKBV5o&sig=ACtTfMcPpdFG8GzunFifp7VQ6Sc#PPR10,M1, Preface viii 13.10.2008.

244 http://www.springerlink.com/content/k721pq3315481528/, 13.10.2008.

lectures in school. Thus, interests of national and cultural identity can be transferred to the story and the reader will voluntarily participate in them as he enters the story of the protagonist.

Elizabeth O'Hara creates various Irish identities in her trilogy, which were mentioned during the last chapter. Those diverse Irish identities are absorbed by the child reader, who draws for himself a picture of the 19th century, and by doing that learns at the same time about traditions, legends, myth and Irishness. National as well as cultural identity is transferred to the reader by the protagonist and as children admire courageous and outstanding protagonists like Sally, they may adopt some of the cultural information of the novel. Therefore, we shall say that features of national as well as cultural identity are absorbed by the reader, and thus a basis for national consciousness is given. Especially children can still be conducted in their perception of things and Elizabeth O'Hara, trying to filter the most important information of the past and passing it on, aims at sensitizing children's national consciousness.

Elizabeth O'Hara, together with other contemporary children's writers like Tom McCaughren, Siobhán Parkinson or Mark O'Sullivan have succeeded in producing novels which set out to fetch Irish history's "human dimension" and "the complexity with which it (the past) is suffused"[245].

Irish history with all of its ups and downs is a fascinating theme even for Irish children's writing. The works of contemporary Irish children's writers feature the attempt towards awaking from the nightmare of Irish history. These books try to see the past free from a sentimental cliché and to lead the perception of national identity on to a modern Ireland.[246]

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245 http://books.google.at/books?hl=de&lr=&id=Pv1mmwjnWXMC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Irish+children%27s+literature+and+national+identity&ots=UvTmrKBV5o&sig=ACtTfMcPpdFG8GzunFifp7VQ6Sc#PPA83,M1, pp.83, 13.10.2008.

246 http://books.google.at/books?hl=de&lr=&id=Pv1mmwjnWXMC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Irish+children%27s+literature+and+national+identity&ots=UvTmrKBV5o&sig=ACtTfMcPpdFG8GzunFifp7VQ6Sc#PPA83,M1, pp.83, 13.10.2008.

Elizabeth O’Hara’s children’s novels describe the powerful legacy of Irish history, which is often said to distinguish the Irish from other folk. It is this legacy of Irishness that will form a part of the child reader’s national conscience and he will carry it on into the modern times without ever forgetting his unique heritage.

As has been pointed out in the chapter on definitions of children’s literature, children’s fiction influences the child’s views, which implies that children’s books are written to pass on both cultural heritage and language to a group of people. Therefore, it can well be said that O’Hara’s children’s books provide an authentic account of what Irish national or cultural identity means. They help to shape the young readers in developing their cultural identity and awareness towards this powerful legacy.

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12. Index

13. Abstract auf Deutsch

Literatur für Kinder ist seit Jahrhunderten ein wichtiges Genre der literarischen Landschaft Europas. Es handelt sich bei Kinderliteratur nicht nur um leichte Unterhaltung, sondern sie stellt auch den Anspruch etwas über die Epoche, in der sie geschrieben wurde, zu berichten. Kinderbücher sind politisch und kommerziell wichtig und geben einen Einblick in die sozialen Begebenheiten einer Epoche und eines Landes.

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit konzentriert sich auf den Aspekt, ob Autoren mit ihrer Literatur Einfluss auf die nationale und kulturelle Identität von Kindern nehmen können, wenn sie in ihren Werken immer wieder auf Traditionen und Bräuche eines Volkes eingehen. In dieser Arbeit wird am Beispiel einer Nation, Irland, und der Trilogie einer irischen Kinderbuchautorin, Elizabeth O'Hara, untersucht, ob Mythen, Traditionen, politische Ereignisse und soziale Hintergründe in einem Werk für Kinder so verpackt werden können, dass die nationale und kulturelle Identität der jungen Leser geschärft wird. Gerade dadurch, dass die Protagonistin in O'Hara's Trilogie selbst auf der Suche nach ihrer Identität ist, kann sich der junge Leser sehr gut mit ihrer Figur identifizieren. Kinder lesen gerne über Helden/Innen, die sich auf ihren eigenen Weg begeben, die stark sind und nicht aufgeben, wenn ihnen Steine in den Weg gelegt werden und die ihre eigenen Fehler machen, ohne dass ständig Erwachsene ihnen den Weg weisen. O'Hara kreiert eine Heldin, die exakt auf diese Ansprüche zugeschnitten ist. Der Leser kann sich in Sallys Rolle hineinversetzen und damit gelingt es der Autorin leichter, kulturelle Traditionen und Bräuche weiterzugeben.

In jungen Jahren ist der Mensch noch leichter zu prägen, vor allem, wenn er sich in der Phase der Identitätsfindung befindet. Hier nimmt er vermutlich eher historische und traditionelle Details seiner Kultur wahr und verinnerlicht sie spielerisch beim Lesen, als später im Geschichtsunterricht der Schule.

Die Autorin hat irische Folklore studiert und bezeichnet sich selbst als „Historian of Emotion“ – eine Historikerin der Emotionen, die die Geschichte ihres Landes durch starke Protagonisten erzählt und zum Leben erweckt. Eine einzelne Figur stellt das Schicksal vieler Iren zu einem gewissen Zeitpunkt der Geschichte dar, jedoch schafft sie es durch ein einzelnes Schicksal die Geschichte für den Leser präsenter zu machen, sie zu emotionalisieren. Unter ihrem Pseudonym „Elizabeth O’Hara“ schreibt sie Kinderliteratur, während sie unter ihrem richtigen Namen „Éilís Ní Dhuibhne“ Literatur für Erwachsene verfasst, allerdings mit derselben Thematik: Irland und sein beeindruckendes Erbe liegen im Fokus ihrer Interessen.

Um den Begriff Kinderliteratur und dessen Entstehungsgeschichte zu verdeutlichen, wird zu Beginn der Diplomarbeit auf dessen Entwicklung eingegangen, die diversen Genres und Autoren beschrieben. Da sich die Arbeit auch den Begriffen nationaler und kultureller Identität zuwendet, werden diese Begriffe im Laufe der Arbeit erläutert und diskutiert. Da die Trilogie O’Hara’s Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts /Anfang des 20.Jahrhunderts spielt, werden zusätzlich politische Aspekte dieser Zeit in Irland erläutert. Elizabeth O’Hara betont im ersten Band der Trilogie die Präsenz des „ungekrönten Königs“ von Irland: Charles Stewart Parnell. Die Geschichte des Politikers soll eine Entwicklungsstufe in der irischen Historie klar machen.

Anhand einer narratologischen Analyse wird die Trilogie auf die historische Zeit, ihr geographisches Umfeld, ihre sozialen Hintergründe und Aspekte von „Irishness“ (typisch irische Eigenheiten) untersucht, um zu verdeutlichen, dass nationale und kulturelle Aspekte eines Landes in der Kinderliteratur den jungen Leser in seiner kulturellen Identität und seinem Nationalbewusstsein prägen können.

Kinderliteratur, wie Literatur im Allgemeinen, beeinflusst die Ansichten des Lesers und impliziert, dass Kinderbücher oft geschrieben werden, um das kulturelle Erbe sowie die Sprache einer Nation an den Leser zu vermitteln. Elizabeth O'Hara gelingt es, die kulturelle Identität ihrer Leser zu schärfen und ihnen ein tieferes Verständnis für Nationalbewusstsein zu unterbreiten.

Curriculum Vitae

Personal Details

Name:	Mag. Patricia Schönberger A-1150 Wien AUSTRIA
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Education

10/2000 – 11/2008	Romance Studies/Italian (M.A. Degree) English Studies (M.A. Degree) Communications Sciences (B.A. Degree)
1992 – 2000	Akademisches Gymnasium Rainberg Salzburg; Abschluss: Matura

Employment History

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07/2007 – 09/2007	ÖBB Konzernkommunikation

Languages

German	native
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